



# VOYAGERS UNAFRAID



I R V I N   A N T H O N Y















# Voyagers Unafraid

by

IRVIN ANTHONY

## CONQUERING THE ATLANTIC SINGLE-HANDED

True stories of men who dared, alone, the wild passage of the great Atlantic in boats scarcely larger than a fragile pleasure launch.

Blackburn, Johnson, Crapo, Andrews, Day, Gerbault — their names are written large upon the log of those who have defied the hungry sea, for their adventures have been unique in the annals of man's courage, and never will be forgotten as long as men go down to the sea in ships.

Solitary, depending upon the strength of their bodies and the cunning of their brains, they drove their cockle-shells, night and day, across the hundreds of miles of storm-tossed ocean to victory. Theirs were the superlative hazards, the long chance; and their stories are incredible records of hardship and of supreme courage.

---

---







VOYAGERS UNAFRAID







Digitized by the Internet Archive  
in 2025

[https://archive.org/details/bwb\\_T5-CUT-024](https://archive.org/details/bwb_T5-CUT-024)



Captain William A. Andrews, a typical single-handed voyager, whose feat was especially noteworthy since of all craft to make the trip, his was the smallest

# VOYAGERS UNAFRAID

---

By IRVIN ANTHONY



A. L. BURT COMPANY  
*Publishers*

New York

Chicago

Published by arrangement with Macrae Smith Co.  
Printed in U. S. A.





COPYRIGHT, 1930, BY IRVIN ANTHONY



*Manufactured in the United States of America*

TO  
*Florence Rena Sabin*





---

## FOREWORD



A BOOK OF WONDERS MUST DEPEND UPON A QUICK FAITH OF THE heart, a mood that catches an instant of emotion and stirs the blood in its urge. It must amaze and astonish that ever its story could be. When the mood has passed, a book to be truly brave, must have the cold stuff of facts to boot.

Bold faces have lightened and the words rolled easily from between bearded lips at the mention of the voyagers without fear. The heart has spoken then, out of fire. The efforts of three or four who went forth in company were brave, much like life at sea anyway, but the putting out of solitary voyagers was a thing that lowered bushy eyebrows while the gaze roved seaward. There was glamour; there was the mystery of illusion which the facts of the mind failed to dazzle by their reasonable light. So, to fulfill the faith of the heart, there was no choice but to write only of those who went to sea singly, or at most in pairs, when the will or the need made that sound.

The facts of daring are quickly lost and in their place springs up a legend, either greater or less than the truth. In the interest of reality many days were spent in the turning of newspaper pages; mummied things, brown and crinkled and reeking of the ghastly antiseptic scent in which they had been preserved. There were letters to be opened, written from far off corners of the earth in response to queries concerning men long dead. There was need of much talk to be raised in old houses of windy nights behind gale-rattled windows, talk in smug offices where glows the red mahogany and even the ash trays are polished to a brassy glitter. At other times clipped speech held the ear amid the hum

of band saws and the fragrance of white cedar dust. All were eager to help a brave story. It was worth nights and days to feel the pride of the tellers when they had known some voyager. It was like hearing a great song from the lips of old bards, each man fashioning the happenings to the mold of his dream, like the lovingly gilded work of old monks laboring in faith and reverie.

That prince of single-handers, Captain Howard Blackburn, gave time to the making of the book, gave it like a boon, gladly, and Mr. Herbert L. Stone of *Yachting* seconded his efforts by allowing me to use his material on Blackburn's voyages. Mr. John J. Burns of the Gorton Pew Fisheries, Gloucester, helped me on a wintry day with Alfred Johnson's dory passage. Mr. H. L. Seaman forgot his lunch hour as he worked with me on the passage of the *Fox*. Captain George D. Haring unlocked material held only on the Jersey beaches. The Miami Chamber of Commerce enthusiastically lent its aid. The Porto Rico Chamber of Commerce availed much. Miss Frances H. Mead, Mr. Louis K. Sayre, Mr. Alfred V. Sayre, Mr. Horace Cooper and Mr. William H. A. Hauser have made many kind suggestions. The Boston Public Library, the New York Public Library, the Philadelphia Public Library and the Mercantile Library of Philadelphia have offered every courtesy possible and have each provided necessary data.

It would be graceless indeed to fail in acknowledging the very special assistance of Eleanor Anthony, who has relieved the tedium of the necessary research by her diligent and patient aid and who has done so much to bring these voyages under one cover at long last.

IRVIN ANTHONY.

ON BOARD THE *Pirate*  
OCTOBER 1, 1930.

# C O N T E N T S



- I: THE CULT OF THE VOYAGERS  
17
- II: LEGENDS AND CURIOSITIES  
29
- III: THE CRAZY DANE: *Alfred Johnson*  
43
- IV: BOUND OUT FOR THE LAND OF ROSES: *Captain Thomas Crapo*  
69
- V: IT'S A LONG WAY: *A Trans-Atlantic Race*  
93
- VI: THE LITTLEST ONE OF ALL: *The Sapolio*  
107
- VII: ROW, SAILOR, ROW: *George Herbo and Frank Samuelson*  
139
- VIII: A POET GOES TO SEA AGAIN: *Captain Joshua Slocum*  
159
- IX: A TOUGH ONE: *Captain Howard Blackburn*  
181
- X: HE SEWED, AND SEWED, AND SEWED: *Alain Gerbault*  
209
- XI: THE TREASURE OF A SMILE: *Captain Harry Pidgeon*  
231
- XII: CANOE DID YOU SAY? *Captain Franz Romer*  
243
- XIII: A HARD LUCK TALE: *Paul Muller*  
259
- BIBLIOGRAPHY  
271









VOYAGERS UNAFRAID



  
A KING'S OR A DOG'S

A SAILOR'S LIFE IS EITHER

—*Captain Eustace Maude*



---

## I: THE CULT OF THE VOYAGERS

☆☆☆ A SEAMAN'S LIFE IS AN ENDLESS ROUND OF WATCH AND watch duty. He must make time, he must stand by his ship upon a track held by other ships. All his energy is devoured in saving pounds of coal, in steam, and wages of the crew, in sail. A quick passage—there is the thing to which he gives his life. A day's lateness brings wrinkles to a captain's forehead, makes a mate surly and a boatswain the terror of the forecastle. The men who stand behind the weather-cloth on the bridge can turn neither to right nor left. The course made good—that is the test of their ability. On either hand stretches the vast Atlantic calling to them to loiter. Just beyond the sea rim may wait strange wonders, but they are not for the men of the shuttling ferry. The ship must get to port, so they look upon the sea-reaches they may never know with a sigh, and turn gruffly upon a hapless steersman, who does not feel that same urgent need of restraint for a passage, while the souls of the watch officers cry after freedom to rove.

It is an illusion without age, that clamoring for new seas. At twenty it lures and it mingles with the bitterness of fifty. Not that it comes only to the professional seaman. It may come to a farmer in Iowa or a piano maker in New York, or a champion tennis player on the Riviera. It is in the heart of a man or it is



nothing. Once the blood yearns for the chance to go adrift quite upon one's own, the call may lead a man through thirty years of hope only to follow through the next thirty to the brink of the grave. Tame men, who take convention easily, sit for hours on a beach looking beyond the surf to the sea edge. Bolder hearts refuse to take the call so lightly, but, heeding the quickened blood, go afloat on their own.

Why? Why the birds singing in the false spring of a February thaw? Why the delight of a dog when he puts up a pheasant for his master's pleasure? Why the joy at acquiring fortune by a well-planned stroke, or the satisfaction of invention, or the comfort of making a new poem, or the sense of success at deftly battling death in an operating room? Why? Because the heart of us is big enough to hold all these things. We clamor for courage, and to heed the call for personal freedom at sea we need courage, but the reason for the urge to undertake, that is the illusion. The puritan yachtsman, who gives his best energies to other things, may explain it by an impulse of greed, but no man has made a fortune crossing the Atlantic in a small boat. Most men who have done it have tried it again. It is as if they found something, alone in the sea stretches, which satisfies, and which sends them back into that peculiar independence each creates for himself. If there is any reward in obeying the sea call it can only be something like that, the sense of personal pride, when, depending only upon his cunning wisdom and his will to endure, the man accepts the illusion. Perhaps, after all, illusion is but remote truth seen dimly.

The challenge of the Atlantic has its terrors. The distance is about three thousand miles, but the interval is as long as it takes to traverse it, and a small boat under oars or sail can never be

swift. To the aviator, Lindbergh, the Atlantic was a threat of thirty-six hours before he would become overdue. Single-handers have usually provisioned their boats for three months. They have accepted a hazard of more than two thousand hours, during which they must live as primitively as the old Vikings, taking whatever the sea chooses to send them, without radio, without shelter, living in drenched clothing much of the time, upon a ration of food not sumptuous and for the most part eaten cold. Once well started it may easily prove as difficult to turn back as go ahead. The wind is king of the sea. There is no running away. A man must be as willing to be at one with the Atlantic as a mystic, crying for unity with the life of the worlds, and yet remain a fighting seaman presenting the gnarled, canny wisdom of his cloth against the ancient malevolence of the great waters.

The dangers of the single-hander are peculiar. He may be exhausted by the distance he attacks. Most men sleep about three hours out of every twenty-four, and that rest is a fitful, broken sort. There is no real bodily quiet except in a dead calm, for the muscles must flex to the lively motion from the start to the finish. In bad weather, men have stood by their boats for seventy-two hours without going below. Exhaustion may bring the awful moment of carelessness and catastrophe. Cramped quarters and strained posture wear a man down out of all proportion to the actual time. A bad night can be a week in the weariness of the hours. Each man sets his own standard of endurance in the face of the hazards which beset him.

If the Atlantic is in an evil mood the voyager may face starvation. To avoid this most men sail the ship tracks that they may have a chance of succor, preferring the hazard of collision in the night, or fog to the more fearful risk of slow death. Collision for

the single-hander is almost sure to mean his death. Steamers cannot be checked in a hundred yards, and even if seen, the small boat is likely to be run down before the momentum can be overcome. Running upon heavy driftwood in the dark, or the failure of hull fastenings under strain may put a small boat to leaking so badly she cannot be kept afloat. A gale may dismast her leaving her a derelict inconspicuous to passing ships at even a half mile in broken water. The voyager may be washed overboard in heavy weather and be unable to regain his boat. Some keep a life line fastened to them all the passage to avoid this. In any case, the perils are adequate to make lone life afloat interesting beyond the desire of much of humanity.

The answer to the successful taking of the long chance rests on the boat and the man. All kinds of boats have succeeded. Steel boats, wooden boats, canvas-covered craft, heavy and light, boats with sails and even one boat equipped only with oars. Boats from just under forty feet and those fifteen feet long, boats drawing eight inches of water and those with a draft of four feet, boats with water-tight compartments and snug cabins and those open to sun, sea and rain.

The principal requirement worth having in a boat engaged in such work is that she be so balanced under canvas that she will sail herself for long periods, freeing the sailor from continuous vigil and allowing him to do other work about deck. Some boats have made the passage that were almost human in this regard, little ships that took advantage of every puff even to work to windward. One at least, the smallest of all, Andrews' little *Sapolio* would even run off the wind under its own helm. Aside from this ability to work her way, the best single-hander is a boat that is easily driven. Mr. Knight summed up the ideals of the

matter years ago thus, "A fast hull and a small rig," but few of the hardy men who have done the trick seem to have concerned themselves with such matters. They have used whatever they had and that has been a motley assortment.

Perhaps, after all, the man is more important than the boat. He must be healthy and strong. Size is an advantage, although light men have done as well as wonderfully built voyagers such as Captain Blackburn and Captain Crapo. It is no mere matter of brawn. The mind is more important. The single-hander must have a will. He must have imagination enough to be resourceful, and not so much that he sees things at night. He must be no babe at sea. No sailor admits that a gale is blowing as hard as it really is. Usually, he dare not; it frightens him and warps his judgment. The Beaufort scale of wind force is usually underestimated by the officers of a vessel; witness the log books of the world. For the preservation of his sanity it is sometimes necessary to engage in such scrupulous evasion. When one gets ashore, ah, then is the time to ask a sailor about a gale. The single-hander is no exception. He reefs or he heaves to in time and tells himself things are not so bad as they were yesterday, or two days ago, or a week back. Not until he is safe ashore does he expand.

There are calms which mean dangerous delay. Then a man must call upon his patience, not grudgingly, but merrily. It is a time to take the sun and warmth and get ready for the driving to come. There are fogs which blind the eye and stretch the nerve to a tension which may end in a collapse from which death may spring out of sleep. A wise man uses the calms to become acquainted with the sea. He fishes and marvels at catching a three-inch mackerel, he watches the entirely too friendly overtures of a ravenous shark, or notes the attendance of innumerable banded

pilot fish loitering in the shade of the idle hull. He takes the time to weigh his passage, to equate its chances of success or failure. Most wisely of all, he accepts the rest that comes to him and does not worry too much about how soon the calm may end. Knowing the moods of the sea to be infinite, he faces infinite possibilities with patience, the strong patience bred of fortitude and ability.

The most difficult thing to maintain is a sense of proportion. In a day of sunshine with a capful of favoring wind that is easy enough. The voyager sees the ocean as a track, his boat as a tracer of honest miles across the chart, himself as a sentient mind at unity with the sea. On a blowy night when the clouds seem to touch the crests that hurtle upon him from ahead, that delicious aloofness that spells sanity is hard to keep. The voyager is no longer master of his fate, his boat is but a cockle shell adrift amid circumstances, and physical fear swamps his ambition. His body cries out for rest. His wits are taxed to the full. He can scarcely think of his destination with any glow of hope, and grey dawn holds little for him or his mission. It is then that the professional sailor who has turned lone sea goer finds the advantage his. He has slogged sea miles before. For him the sea is still a track for a voyage, his ship still an unit progressing toward a port. The interval of lying hove to is endurable, the flight under short sail is a practical answer to his needs and he keeps the sense of perspective so essential to his safety.

Perhaps the hardest thing to master is a knowledge of just when to mix caution and daring in driving ahead when the wind is fair, but the sea dangerous. Just how long to run—there is a nice question. The voyager knows his boat cannot hope to equal the speed of the waves. Ocean waves have been known to reach a velocity of twenty-two knots. Running, in seas travelling even



a little faster than the boat, involves the risk of being boarded from the stern and washed clean, if not broached to and swamped. Wet, hungry, a man summons every shred of fire he has and holds his boat to it as long as possible. Miles are made quickest so, miles that spell a chance of success are gambled against the possibility of instant disaster. It is hard to heave a small boat to without accident. It is desirable to carry on as long as the chance can be taken for fair wind is the hope of the single-hander. No small boat can hope to beat its way across the Atlantic. She may for a short time hammer out a tack to windward to regain what she has lost while lying hove to, but the punishment to both man and boat is severe and must be foregone before a great while, and a fair wind awaited. The voyager dare not drive himself until the last of his enthusiasm has gone, for upon the fire of his heart he lives. Despair comes quickly to the wind and sea baffled who carry on into exhaustion.

There it is in short; the thing that keeps the single-hander alive is the sacred fire of his illusion. Men have made the voyage with a variety of intent. Crapo sailed to make money out of his courage. Lawlor battled for a passage in the shortest time and Andrews went out alone to emulate Columbus. Blackburn carried good will from his own Gloucester in Massachusetts to Gloucester, England. Captains Voss and Norton undertook crossings to prove their pet inventions. Voss justified his patent sea anchor and Norton's lifeboat failed him. He never came back. Herbo and Samuelson used the Atlantic as a test for their sturdy manhood. Many of the voyagers attained their purpose, but that did not end their desire. The thrill of danger, of independence urged them to try other battles. Scarcely a man gave up after the first attempt and those who did never turned their



backs upon salt water entirely. The lone voyager is a hard-headed man in many ways but in this he is visionary—his illusion outlasts his success. This is the blessing of the gods, the following of a long quest for itself.

The nature of the sacred dream of endeavor is elusive. The old man of the sea has the deep eyes of a god. Neptune's trident is not barbed for naught. By mysteries of his own he creates worship, binding his men to him in a fever of hardy devotion. His spells are woven secretly: out of the lure of fair beauty, the spell of great waters, out of the vigilant hardihood of the voyager, the high-hearted longing to return to the life afloat. The man so touched is like a wanderer pursuing the green and golden lights into the dim, purple mountains beyond the hateful deserts. He has to be of that desperate sort, equating life's values peculiarly in his own fashion under the bondage of the sea.

"There is a magic in the distance, where the sea line meets the sky  
It shall call to singing seamen till the fount o' song is dry."

There you have it, by the beard of Neptune: the illusion is the cry of wonder, the quickening of the pulse at the nearness of the unknown, the desire for self-reliance, the urge to face the four winds of heaven and dispute their mastery over the sea, over man's desire, and to beard the ever lurking death waiting to write failure at the close of the adventure.

Here is the tale of the voyagers, big and little, old and young, men who have felt the fire and who even when caught sadly in the throes of failure have said, "Next time it will be different, perhaps more fortunate. Let us try. Sure we'll come back." Caught out of their rapture, struggling to the last beat of the

blood, some have gone to the bottom, but they have played their game to the end of both joy and disappointment, and none of them have proven false to the sacred flame. So, by the virtue of high hearts, cool heads and steady hands, to them the laurels—voyagers unafraid.



~~~~~ SHIP OF THE BODY, SHIP  
OF THE SOUL, VOYAGING, VOYAGING, VOYAGING

—*Walt Whitman*





---

## II: LEGENDS AND CURIOSITIES

☆☆☆ THE CULT OF THE SMALL BOAT VOYAGER HAS AN ANCIENT and honorable lineage. In the oldest bit of English that has come down to us is this:

"The men shoved out the well-joined wood on its willing journey. They went over the billowy sea, sped by the wind, the foamy-necked ship, likest to a bird, till next day at the hour awaited the curved prow had gone so far that the seafarers might see the land, the shore cliffs gleam, the broad sea-nesses. Then was the ocean farer at the end of its voyage." So began an adventure of Beowulf. Notice the seamanlike despatch of it. Clean, crisp, salty diction that, not the maundering of some abbey-loving cleric. A lovely touch to rest the standards of any navy upon quite trustfully, clear and bold as the epitaph of the buccaneer's quartermaster.

"A very tall man, and a right good mariner, taken away to the great grief of Captain and Company."

There too is the brave touch of a seaman.

In America there is a legend that Captain Richard J. Cleveland of Salem, two hundred thirty years ago, sailed a fifteen-foot cutter single-handed from the Cape of Good Hope to Alaska. Unfor-

tunately for this legend the Captain, in his letters, and his son who wrote a biography of him both fail to reveal any such voyage. He did sail a forty-three ton cutter sloop from Havre to the Isle of France with a crew that could only be matched in comic opera. He shipped a Nantucket Yankee, a Prussian soldier, a negro, an English boy of seventeen and a French lad of thirteen. He left Havre on October 26, 1797, and reached the Cape on March 27, 1798, where he was held by the British until the despatches of the directory, which he carried, might be so old as to be valueless, when he proceeded to the Isle of France. An even more reckless trip was his voyage from Calcutta to the Isle of France in a twenty-five ton pilot boat rigged as a cutter. The cruise took forty-five days and was not done single handed. It is true, too, that Cleveland sailed in a cutter from Canton, China, on January 10, 1791, took thirty-one days to beat up from Canton to Formosa, a traverse then generally thought impossible, and heading for America, made Norfolk Sound on March 30, 1791. The cutter, however, was well-manned, so the legend is only partially true. Yet Cleveland was venturesome enough to make him a worthy character to acknowledge as father of the clan. Any man would have a right to feel alone with a crew like his first, and at heart he is a single-hander; happiest when afloat. "I have now the high gratification of uncontrolled action," he wrote, when once off shore with good black water under him.

The sea has always called men. We know of Cleveland, of Sir Humphrey Gilbert lost in returning to England in the fifteen ton *Squirrel*, after making the westward passage to America in safety, of young John Boit, Jr., who at nineteen sailed as a master of a sixty foot sloop around the Horn to Vancouver, where she spent the winter in trade and then on around the world, home

by way of Canton, coming into port safely in 1796. Between Columbus and Cleveland there were at least a few ventures and with the growth of America there were many who yielded to the small boat, but it is not until much later that such sailings caught the eye and fancy of the nation. Nearly sixty of these attempted crossings have found their way to the daily press, some of them going back to Civil War days.

The defiance of the Atlantic called into being queer boats and queer rigs. Men who think of such matters as single-handed crossings are often original souls with ideas of their own. In 1866 there was the famous *Red, White and Blue*. She was an Ingersoll metallic lifeboat to which had been awarded a gold medal by the American Institute in 1865. She was twenty-six feet long, six feet beam, and had a depth of hold of two feet ten inches. Built upon the regular Ingersoll pattern of galvanized sheet iron, she had numerous air compartments and a special self-bailing device operated by India rubber valves set in her bottom. She was ship rigged, and her trial trip on June 30, 1866, from the foot of Pike Street, New York City, drew crowds to watch her evolutions. Captain J. B. Hudson and Captain Fitch took her down off the Battery. The wind was very light, but she tacked about successfully and handled exceedingly well.

On July 9 this little three tonner put to sea, taking departure from Sandy Hook at five in the afternoon, bound for Liverpool. On the eleventh she was spoken by the pilot boat *A. T. Stewart*, twenty-five miles southeast of the Atlantic Highlands. Head winds had met her at the start. She was hove to under her fore topsail in a northeast breeze, but doing nicely. The pilot boat reported her as handling "equal to a large ship."

The wind drew southeast and she got a chance, under her fore

and main topsail, to work up the coast in time to be reported by the pilot boat *Freeman*.

There are few details of her passage to be found, but she was spoken at sea by the *Princess Royal*, a blue nose barque. She next appeared off Portland Bill on August 14 and passed Hastings, on the south coast of England on Wednesday, August 15. The two men reported all well after a voyage of thirty-seven days. She was then the smallest craft to cross the ocean. Two days later she was still off Deal wrestling with the Channel tides on her way to London. She was exhibited the next year at the Paris exposition as a specimen of American skill and fortitude. Apparently, she returned upon her own bottom to be among the yachts waiting off Sandy Hook for the end of the International Yacht race between the *Dauntless* and the *Cambria*, for there is an item in the New York *Tribune* for July 25, 1870, which reads, "The *Red, White and Blue*, twenty-six feet long, which has twice crossed the ocean, upset down harbor crowded with newspaper men." It seems her one man crew, a fat boy, went aloft for some purpose, and his weight was too much for the diminutive sea-goer, to the disgust of the dripping press men. So passes the *Red, White and Blue* from the scene.

In 1867 the idea had become more popular. Captain John Wikes and two men tested out a life raft built of four iron cylinders and named the *American*, by sailing it safely from New York to Southampton, England. It took them fifty-two days, but the surprising thing is that they ever arrived without being washed from the deck perched on top of the cumbersome affair. Miller and Lawton, in the same year, began the long string of dory passages by leaving Gloucester and twenty-seven days later reaching Southampton in the *Nonpareil*.



*The Islander* ashore at Northwest Bay





Of all the voyagers who braved the Atlantic crossing, Thomas Crapo seems to have been the most surprised at what the journey really was like. First he marvelled at their lack of shelter. Then, too, he was astonished to see how small the *New Bedford* had grown. When Mrs. Crapo crawled in under the deck she had to sleep with her feet on a water cask



Frank Leslie's *Illustrated Newspaper* for July 16, 1870, contains a picture of the *City of Ragusa*. She was originally a ship's boat and had escaped the wreck of her mother ship, the *Breeze*, when that vessel foundered in an Irish Channel gale. She carried fourteen of the crew to safety at Ramsey on the Isle of Man. Having been so proven she was decked over, a trunk cabin added and the hull rigged as a yawl. Her master, J. C. Buckley, put on board provisions for three months, and one hundred gallons of water. Her rig was modest, seventy yards of canvas, but she carried extra square sails for both masts and a curious lug topsail on the main. To judge by Leslie's picture she must have been rather a clumsy looking craft with more than a touch of the amateur. Her ports were diamond shaped, smacking rather of a house carpenter than a shipwright. When he was ready, Buckley had her cleared at the Liverpool Custom House. With him sailed one man named Harper, and a Newfoundland dog. One hates to think of the experience of the dog so cramped for so long a time, but apparently he was adaptable, and perhaps as good a sailor as either of the men, for all landed safely in Boston after a voyage of ninety-eight days. Buckley had allowed fifty days, thinking the prevailing westerly winds which check a vessel making the westward passage, would hold him back somewhat, but it took him almost twice as long. He was fortunate at that. The westward passage is seldom done.

Every so often some voyager decides to take the long chance. The idea seizes men often as a crazy possibility but soon it grows to a mania. Nothing will do them but an attempted voyage. A few build their boats, and then, having tasted the fruit of press notoriety, flee from the attempt as from a plague. Of those who actually sail, and do not make it, there is usually only the brooding

silence of the sea. A few fortunate men may fare as did Captain W. A. Andrews, when in 1888, he sailed from Boston in the *Dark Secret*, took a terrific beating for sixty-eight days and was picked up by the *Nor* only one hundred fifty miles east of Boston. Marshall and French who tried the passage in 1868 in a skiff, the *John T. Ford*, were not so lucky. The skiff was lost, Marshall shared its fate, but French was brought in by a passing "propeller" as they called steamers in those days. The newspapers gradually came to give very little attention to these efforts. For instance, when one of the less fortunate voyages got under way, the New York *Herald* for June 22, 1896, has this simple announcement:

"Frank Charlsen, sailor in employ of John Jacob Astor, yesterday sailed in a boat from Battery Basin for Liverpool."

There followed a brief sentence or so saying his brother had sailed with him, the boat was twenty feet long, six feet eight inches beam, drawing twenty-six inches of water. She was built of cedar and was open amidships, and set a mainsail, jib and flying jib. Two thousand unenthusiastic people watched them sail. She lived up to their expectations for nothing was ever heard of Charlsen or his brother again. The silence of the sea took them.

Perhaps the case of the *Pandora* shows the uncertainty of a trans-Atlantic venture. The *Pandora* was a thirty-seven foot yawl which sailed from Bunbury, West Australia, on May 3, 1910. Two men manned her. She was much like Slocum's famous *Spray*. She reached Melbourne May 29, 1910, Sydney in August, Auckland, New Zealand in September, clearing for Pitcairn Island on October 2. Leaving Pitcairn on November 21, she enjoyed a summer run to Easter Island and so to the rounding of

Cape Horn on January 16, 1911. Six days later she was thrown on her beams end by a gale and then rolled completely over, losing her mast in righting. A whaler gave her a line and towed her to the West Falkland Islands. She was repaired and on March 4 sailed for St. Helena, then on to Ascension Island, leaving autumn behind, and so across the line and on to New York where she came to anchor among the yachts in Gravesend Bay on June 23, 1911. Her pair of venturers had a fine, salty yarn to tell by then, and they spun it in the left-handed way of sailors. Her captain was on his way home to Coventry. The seas of the world lay behind. There was only this short western ocean stretch left. Jolly old England a short cruise away! The *Pandora* cleared, was reported as passing out Sandy Hook, and then vanished as utterly as if she had never been, as if with her two navigators she had been the Flying Dutchman of small boats and had never had any honest reality within the memory of the world.

Whether men perish, or whether they succeed seems to have little effect upon other sea-smitten voyagers. They know that the port of missing ships is a moony place where the ghostly mother Cary strips the bones of honest sailors and throws them to Davy Jones who carves scrimshaw work upon them and growls about their quality. They know there's little fame in success, and no fortune, but from time to time they clear from Boston, or New York, or Gloucester and sail away to learn for themselves what it is all about.

A few have a definite purpose. Sometimes a man sails to test a theory of diet or to try out a reefing gear. Perhaps the strangest voyage of all came about as the result of a thoroughly hard-headed idea. Every fisherman knows the terror of an open boat in heavy weather. Added to the exhaustion of exposure, that

comes all too quickly to men so subject to every whim of the weather, is the paralysis of the screaming wind that befuddles one after a time, throwing discretion aside and making a man seem a struggling insect embarked upon a wave-swept plank. Ship's boats have always been open, partly because of expense, partly because of tradition.

Captain Brudel of Aalesund, Norway, gave much thought to an improved lifeboat. He was living in an age when metal was no longer impossible to work. Why not make an iron boat that gave the crew some genuine shelter, yet defied the sea by its strength? That was the gist of his idea and he played with its details until he evolved the *Vraad*.

The *Vraad* was eighteen feet long with a depth of eight feet and as wide as she was deep; a short metal cylinder with neatly rounded ends. Fully loaded, she drew four feet of water. Her beam was increased by a wooden fender through-bolted clear around the metal shell. It was hoped this wale would act as a bilge keel, or sponson, breaking the roll her rounded under-water sections would make inevitable. Her frames were circular, of heavy iron running from the keel to the top side, and her sides were riveted to them. For this sheathing ordinary boiler plates one eighth of an inch thick were used. They were amply strong, but of course a collision would have opened them like a tin can; another reason for the rub strake of wood just above the water-line. She was a dish pan of a boat, like a black water bug, or an English walnut. No more revolutionary craft ever faced the three thousand miles of grey water.

She could be handled from the top side in fair weather. A hollow steel mast lifting twenty feet above the hull and stepped well into her eyes, spread a lug sail of two hundred fifty square



feet. This mast was raked aft sharply. Forward, but set somewhat in her sides, were two glass ports. These were of the heaviest material practicable and could be opened for ventilation when the weather permitted, giving a good circulation of air right through the little craft. In bad weather the crew worked entirely below decks, steering and trimming sails. It was surprising what storage space the circular cross sections of the hull permitted. No one, not even Brudel, looked for remarkable speed; she could not have it, but with a tight iron hull and no considerable exposure the *Vraad* was generally thought safe.

Captain Brudel shipped three men and sailed from Aalesund on June 27, 1904. The crew was large enough to permit watch and watch work. Brudel was more interested in proving his boat the most enduring hull possible than in any personal exploit. He had visions of other boats of the type swinging from the davits of thousands of steamers. Nothing like a long voyage to point to as a test of his invention.

The North Atlantic was kind. The *Vraad* was not much to windward and she was heavy-footed on any point of sailing. Her bow squashed the water out ahead like the nose of a scow. She scarcely did better than two knots. She was to prove safety had been attained, not speed. She lived thoroughly to the honesty of her conception. It was, however, a long slogging over the Atlantic. She was too slow to try a southern passage where the winds might prove more helpful, for the distance was almost twice as long. Brudel headed her across the North Atlantic, ready to take what came. The Atlantic was friendly, or perhaps contemptuous.

The passage was so slow that summer came and went, fall began and died before the *Vraad* was at last off Nova Scotia. Com-

ing down the Bay of Fundy the Atlantic awoke. A real touch of winter swept down upon the heels of a snorting northwester and the *Vraad* was blown away to sea faster than she had ever sailed, a nut shell caught in honest storm fury. She was well provisioned and carried enough water for all emergencies. With the aid of her centerboard she beat back when the strength of the gale gave her a chance.

Again came the clear, screaming weather, with snow, and the *Vraad* could do nothing with it but run for her life. The crew would have been glad enough to escape from the prison-like walls by then, but they bravely put her back on her course as soon as they dared and continued their two knot slogging toward America.

The winter was really down now and success looked dubious. Brudel might have been picked up by a steamer. He was not far from the lane, but his Viking blood would not yield as yet. The fishing fleets of Lofoten have stood such weather before and come home. The *Vraad* was tight and able. He would have another go at it. He would keep her hammering at the job to the last of his food and water. The lug sail was set again, the centerboard lowered, and she drove again for the coast of America.

As if to test him and shake his resolution to the roots a new northwester broke upon them. It was worse than the first two, but she lived. It was a draggled, storm-bruised crew that at last, when the gale had passed, headed yet again for America. It had been June when they undertook the weary business and Christmas Day they spent still cooped below in the iron shell of their craft. Bitter weather added to their discomfort. There was no warmth to be had and the chill of the sea crept upon them, growing



more bitter and penetrating every day. Men so long out of touch with land become queer. It would not have been surprising if any of them had run amuck over some petty grievance and murder had taken possession of the *Vraad*. The stability of the Norse blood told there. They would sail the boat into a port if it took them till another summer. Food was running short. Water had to be used sparingly. By New Year's Day they were getting in by dogged determination. Would a gale come again? Would they ever be done with their prison of iron?

On the evening of January 7, 1905, land was in sight and they pushed on through the early winter dusk determined to reach it that night. Gloucester is not a hard port to enter, but men seven months afloat and so sea weary could scarcely be expected to make a perfect landfall. When they saw the gleam of Eastern Point Light they held straight on. The town lights ahead, to their fevered eyes, seemed to be lights of vessels, a forest of twinkling torments, meaningless and confusing, but the lights of a harbor at last. Before they could get their minds clear they had beached the *Vraad* high and dry and the voyage was ended. There is a record of courage—two hundred twenty-one days between land and land spent in an eighteen foot boat.

Courage is difficult enough where there is comradeship. It was no mean voyage for instance that Thomas Fleming Day made in his twenty-five foot yawl *Sea Bird* in 1911, but he had Fred B. Thurber and Theodore Goodwin to respond to an all hands call. He was a real sea dog, and two good companions made it all easier. The same thing is true of the voyage in 1912 of the *Detroit*, the second motor boat to cross. Day commanded this thirty-five footer and carried William Moreton, Charles E. Earle, Jr. and William Newstead with him. Here was a jolly company,

men to gam with, men to share hardship and success. This is a merry way to seek adventure, and perhaps completely sane, but very different from the loneliness of a single-hander who must find his solace in a far off goal often unknown, and always viewed through doubts and fears, with the always present possibility of failure carrying one to the port of missing ships, unsung and utterly lost.

After all, the principal reward for single-handers has to be found in the lonely desire to excel that starts them upon their giddy attempts. There is little enough trace even of success. A mere announcement in the *New York Times* that Captain Eisenbraum has arrived in Gibraltar, one hundred and one days out of Boston in his *Columbia II*, which port he left August 11, 1903. A second sentence may tell the careless world that the *Columbia II* was nineteen feet long with a beam of six feet. For the rest; for the reward of suffering and the satisfaction, for the joys and moments of mad fear, the single-hander has to search in his heart. There is, all too frequently, the only memorial to his prowess. Yet every story is different, for the mood of the sea is the law of each poor sailorman, and the mood alters as the dream of the brooding sea heart, capricious and cruel, but infinite in variety.

 THERE WAS ROOM TO LIE  
AND SLEEP, AND ROOM TO SIT AND SMOKE AND  
WHAT DOES ANY MAN WANT MORE?

—*Arthur Ransome*



---

### III: THE CRAZY DANE: *Alfred Johnson*

☆☆☆ THE MEN LEFT THE WATER FRONT. IT WAS COLD WITH the sun down. The cap logs were ice coated. The planks and stringers cracked frostily under foot. About the spidery piling the chowder ice swished in the tide. The west wind sang like a lash along the face of the hill, bitter, stinging. The wharves were quiet save for the rattle of old sheds and the roar of the half gale sweeping through.

Up the hill into Gloucester town they went, climbing narrow lanes, past dingy, broken windowed buildings. From flake yards, sail lofts, spar yards and rope walks they went unto smoky, double burner lamps that lighted the noisy saloons. Some rubbed knuckles that had been frosted. Others, whose feet could not stand the heat of the stove, moved after comfort. These were the older men, who drank a bit, gammed a moment to get the news of the day, and went on home, leaving the warmth and noise behind. There was often strange talk under the low ceilings, plain men speaking their hearts after the long days in the dories and the silence of the sea.

Words of life loosened in sea wracked throats.

"I've had my head between my knees thinking for a year. That's the reason I'm round shouldered. Sure, I'm going to get a mechanical fog horn that will put all the conch shells and tin

horns over the side. And what is more, there will be no improvements on it. No sir, no improvements. When I get done it'll be perfect."

"I went to sea to shake bad companions I'd fallen in with, and the men ain't angels at sea neither. . . ."

"Finns! It ain't dem. Ah, dose Russians. I don't know why dey are so savage. Dose are der people dat der missionaries ought to be sent to. . . ."

"And I see the lights on the custom house, and by Gar, I know I'm home, and in the harbor, but I shouldn't be—see?"

"No skipper settles with me that way, not while Ambrose knows it. I go with him? No. . . ."

"You know the *Mary Brown's* stern, a brute of a stern and a short counter. Johnson said he wouldn't go into her at all, said he'd rather go in a dory all his life, take it anywhere rather than go in the *Mary*. Here he is now. . . ."

It was true, that last rumble, lifting above the run of gossip. In walked a young Dane, sparely built and none too heavy. His eyes were deep set under heavy brows and he was quick, with the advantage of the slight man.

"Would you go in the *Mary Brown*?"

"No, I wouldn't go in the *Mary Brown*."

"Why?"

"I'm too smart. I'd sooner go in a dory—clear to France or England."

"You're crazy. Sure, you're crazy."

"Crazy? Well, I'm new to fishing here no doubt, but I worked an eight day week across the Pacific three times and I could take a dory to England."

"A dory? Wait 'til you've been into them longer."



"The Pacific ain't winter on George's Bank, and no doubt there's worse off shore. I've seen it blow a breeze of wind off Canso Bank and round by Sable Island. Only a fool would look at it and think of a dory twice."

"Fool—I'll show you the fool. I'll build a dory and sail her bang into England. I'll show you I'm right."

"Drink on it, Johnson, drink on it."

"That's what I came for, not this nonsense about a dory."

Then as if his grumbling might be mistaken for regret:

"I'll make that voyage when I make three more Grand Bank halibut trips. Mind, right spang to England and no ports of call, no Azores."

"Well, here's to you."

Alfred Johnson had stumbled upon the adventure of his life.

Behind him in the saloon there was a deal of sly winking and slow grins. The crazy Dane! He was off his head with pride in his youth. Wait until he got past Cape Sable and off toward the Flemish Cap, the lunatic. The Gloucester men had found the stranger's weakness. Alfred Johnson was both quick and stubborn. It was too bad in a way, for he had the making of a good fisherman in him, but if a man would be stiff necked and short, let him sail a dory to England.

Johnson made his trips for halibut and when the spring came back, the laggard Cape Ann spring, that slips at once into summer, he had earned the two hundred dollars he needed. It had been a good winter. By then his friends had relented. The idea had been theirs, but they did not want him to attempt such folly. There was not even a chance of his succeeding. These men knew the sea, but since that winter's night Johnson had thought of little else. There was time for thought in winter fishing, so long as

the blood's young and the flesh little pinched by the numbing cold. He was strong, twenty-nine years old, with no thought life could hurt him. Winter fishing had taught him cunning and given him confidence. He would have a boat and sail for England.

He gave orders for a dory and stood about to see her built. No nails were driven into her on Sunday. Small birds might perch about her at will, and a bee would have been regarded with favor, but a soaring hawk was looked upon with every suspicion as having designs upon her luck. A hawk, owl or crow settling in a smack's rigging was deadly to a cruise. This dory needed fortune. When the hatch covers were made he saw to it that they were never turned bottom side up, and if his friends wanted to play a tragic joke, they had but to put an umbrella on board to break the young Dane's heart. He was a good sailor man and sound in his superstitions.

His dory had a keel sixteen feet long. She was twenty feet over all, only twenty feet and the whole north Atlantic to cross. She was five and a half feet wide on deck, a good beam, and had a sharp flare to her sides. She was decked with planks eight inches wide, which made many shake their heads. Decking should be laid narrow, even a fool should know that, and decking had no place on a dory. From her deck to her keel she was just thirty inches deep. A low footboard ran quite around her atop the gunwale. It would serve to keep anything laid upon the deck from rolling overboard instantly. There were only two openings in the top side. Each was edged by a coaming four inches high to keep out the dollop of sea bound to be always on the deck. The forward opening was a big hatchway almost amidships. This received the ship's stores; all the necessities to

keep Alfred Johnson alive and fit on his voyage. It was divided into two shallow holds by the centerboard trunk which ran the full length of it. Aft of this hatchway was a small steering well where the fighting would be done. The helm could be minded, and every sail be both hoisted and tended from that squarely cut hole. Two water tight bulkheads were built in, wooden walls for the safety of the ship if the water poured below about the voyager; one just forward of the steersman's well and the other just astern it. The after bulkhead had a hole large enough to get spare canvas in and out through it from the minute sail locker. The forward bulkhead had a little slide in it, so that Johnson would not be entirely cut off from his supplies when the weather was too rough to make it safe to stir the cover of the big, amidship hatch.

There were two matters to which Alfred Johnson, impulsive as he was, gave much thought. It was no pleasure cruise he was about, yet he joked of the days he would have to spend in the steering well. Water might go bad, food spoil or run short, sickness overtake him, but these his youth smiled upon. There were only two questions he asked himself over and over.

He had seen men washed overboard off the big bankers. Men were lost at sea in dories and by falling from aloft, but worst of all they were frequently washed overboard. Weighed down as the trans-Atlantic dory would have to be, with supplies and water, Johnson could picture it, only four strakes deep, swept by a sea. He saw himself torn out of his steering well and spilled into the welter of windy water. He cudgelled his wits, but in the end he accepted the situation. He admitted the sea would probably knock him out of the well. That could not be helped, but neither could he be stopped from climbing back on board if he

and his boat were tied together. He would pass a line about his mast and secure the other end about his body. It would be a long line so there would be no chance of it jerking him back suddenly and bashing his skull, or breaking his ribs against the boat, and yet short enough not to foul his gear or get caught about the rudder, breaking loose the pintles.

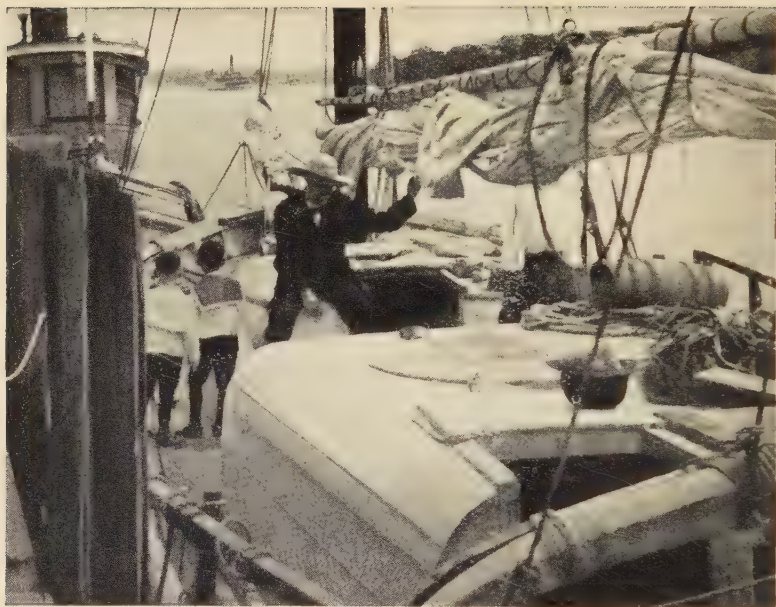
This matter of his personal safety considered, he had a more difficult problem in mind. A dory, with her nose held up to wind and sea, is perhaps the most able boat alive, but she is at her best light, because then she can be handled quickly, and, except when riding to a drogue or sea anchor, it is the handling that makes a dory safe. The pressure of the wind upon a mast is surprising. Johnson knew that his boat would be better in heavy weather with her mast unshipped. To be caught napping and to be capsized with the rigging taut might snap her spar in an instant. Then where would the dory be? She'd be left a wreck, and he could eat his food, drink his water and die. He needed the mast, but he would have liked to leave it ashore. So at last he compromised. He decided to step his mast in a tabernacle. He ran two bitts of timber through his deck to the keel, leaving a foot of the pair above the deck. Between these he placed the heel of his mast and rigged it so that it could be lowered and laid on deck. Now he could heave to and save it if necessary. If he needed to reeve off new gear: chafed halliards, worn stays and shrouds, it would be easy with the mast lowered. No man alive could have climbed the stick of such a boat without upsetting her. Perhaps no dory ever built in Gloucester had carried her mast in a tabernacle. Johnson's friends looked at him with more respect.

The rig was simple. A mainsail and two jibs, a sliding bow-



*Captain Andrews in the Sapolio*





COURTESY OF MOTOR BOAT

Of all the single-handers none is so well remembered as  
Captain Joshua Slocum. He was a poet upon a voyage. In  
fantasy he was seeking freedom



sprit, a strong but light boom and a short gaff to spread the head of the sail, the whole topped by an American flag flown at the masthead, fisherman fashion. When she was rigged and ready she needed only a name.

It was 1876. The Republic had lasted a hundred years. The United States were to celebrate their first century. Alfred Johnson by then felt himself to be an American. He had caught the patriotic fire of the Gloucestermen. When he looked around for a name for his boat he heard everywhere the word Centennial. There was going to be a great exposition. Gloucester itself was going to celebrate. Johnson named his dory. He painted *Centennial* on the bow and on the stern, not Gloucester, Mass., nor Gloucester, U. S. A., but just Gloucester. There was a sea-going city that needed no apologies in the ports of the world, sure of welcome among seafaring people the world over.

At last his canned food, his tea, sugar and hard bread were on board. His water he carried in a cask. He was provisioned for ninety days. By dint of economy he had gotten together a chart, a compass and a quadrant. Of course he had a lead, no fisherman would leave out that, but for a chronometer he carried a clock. These instruments he stowed carefully, secured under the deck with his supplies. He could see his compass through the little scuttle in his forward bulkhead. Somewhere he had gotten an alcohol stove to cook on, but he knew better than to hope to use it much. His boat was no liner with iron hooped masts and saloons in red plush and colored glass. He must be satisfied with such food as he could get and the limited strength of thin pine and good oak. If he got fair wind astern he had a square sail ready to be set. In general, the *Centennial* was well found if in simple sort.

No Gloucesterman courts the idea of being a hero, so he belittles his efforts even when they are herculean, he speaks slightingly of his own great doings. Both before and after the voyage Johnson accepted the public verdict of him and his daring. He fully admitted he was a fool, a damn fool, but he knew his purpose and humbly he clung to it. The *Centennial* should be sailed smack into an English port, he would answer for that with his life. Scarcely a foot of her showed above water when she was fully laden, but he was ready for what might come. He only waited for fair weather.

He sailed on the sixteenth of June. He made fast his life line about his waist not to be cast off till he touched land. Getting into his cramped steering well he got under way. "Poor man, we'll never see him again." All Gloucester came down and defied superstition. Watch a ship out of sight, never see her again. It did not matter, they would never see him again anyway. His plucky little craft looked very small slipping across the harbor through the hard, bright morning. All the pierhead crowd wished him luck, but they knew the sea. They were not amateurs, those hard-bitten folk. A breeze of wind and where would the dory be? She was slow, too; four knots with her load was good going for her. But she was off; Johnson was living up to his boast. Friends sailed out beside him still urging him not to be crazy, to give up now, but the sting of earlier laughter had touched him. He might be a mad Dane but he was no quitter. He sailed past old Cape Ann light and took to the roll of the sea outside.

He made light of his risks. Nothing was very difficult. He only sat and steered her and kept her going. Instead of the plentiful fare of the bankers with many a "mug up," snatches of

food scattered between the three square of the fishing fleet, he began rationed meals. Through the day he sailed, and at night he hove to and slept. That was dangerous, for in the dark he had a good chance of being run down by larger vessels, but it had to be chanced. He was wet from the first, spray soaked. There was no facility for keeping a log, and Johnson was no man to trouble himself with one. He worried a little about his drinking water: would it keep in the keg? If it didn't he knew the dread of the fisherman of thirst. There was no ice to look to with the salt frozen out of it. It was summer sailing.

However, if there were no ice there was fog and the fair weather of his departure soon failed the lone sailor. The wind fell off and, when it came again, drew ahead. The fog shut down, black, boiling sea fog. It is curious that fog always brings its own sea under it. That first fog was very different from the casual pall a man meets fishing. There was no smack cruising about trying to pick up the *Centennial*. Johnson's loneliness must have come home to him then. Wet, the chill struck to his bones. He had a case of liquor with him to use in just such an affair, but even fire in the stomach cannot lift the depression of a dripping sea fog. The danger of being run down was doubled by it. Little sleep came to him in those days and it held on to the twenty-second of June, almost a week of unfavorable conditions.

He came to doubt everything by then, most of all his compass. Well down on the keel, under his supplies, he carried iron ballast, and in a boat only thirty inches deep it was close enough to the compass to do anything with it. His boat was tight enough. His pump, built in beside the coaming of his steering well, sucked quickly; there was little or no water below. His spars and sails

were doing well, his food was not impossible, he could sleep in a fashion, although not cradled exactly in the lap of luxury, but what was the good of any of these things if he could not depend upon his compass? That needed checking first. He had no means of doing it well at sea, and if done at all he must take the *Centennial* where he would be able to get at the iron ballast to make what adjustment might be possible. He decided upon Shag Harbor behind Cape Sable, at the southern tip of Nova Scotia. He made it safely, much to the astonishment of the few people he met, settled his quarrel with his compass, and put to sea again by the twenty-fifth of June. It was after all much easier work than tending trawl on the banks and this time there could be no ports of call before an English harbor.

As if to put heart into the young adventurer the weather turned fine and the wind fair. The *Centennial* climbed easily the long backs of the off shore swell, sometimes logging five knots—five sea miles an hour—what a gait with which to attack three thousand miles of mystery and hazard! She sailed nearly east. Quickly she went off soundings. Johnson coiled up his lead line and stowed it under deck. Keeping well south of Sable Island and below the southern tip of the Newfoundland Banks, the lone dory plugged away at her task. Every mile led her further and further from any but a passing hope of succor. The very favor of a kind wind in those grey seas might have been prophetic, but Alfred Johnson cast about for no augury, fortunately he was hard headed.

Twelve days of fine weather drove him far into the reaches of the Atlantic, then the sky hazed and the weather turned dirty. The northern seas were going to show no mercy. A good breeze of wind grew out of the southwest and the sea got up. The dory

was flying then from breaking crest to crest. By the seventh of July she was in latitude 41.50 north and longitude 54 west. The seas buffeted her, climbing over the sharp stern. Johnson, crouched in his steering well, fought his battle to keep her off before it. He did well to keep her from broaching to, but at last a sea swept him from stern to bow. It started the coaming of his hatch and his supplies were drenched by sea water. Sodden, the little craft sagged, but, gathering headway again, tore out of the smother, still headed for England. It was a black time. Johnson never felt so fully his folly. The brave talk under the lights of a Gloucester bar had done the trick. The dory was hard put to it to live. A barque from Mexico for Liverpool raced up alongside, a thing of the devil. The skipper invited Johnson to come on board, boat and all. He should be dropped off Cape Clear and nothing said about it. Looking at his storm-swept dory, Johnson fought it out with himself. The barque spelled security. He was terribly cramped by then. There was no chance to stretch his legs on board and he had exhausted the restfulness of every posture. The generous deck of the barque offered relief, but Johnson lifted his head above the breaking seas. The story of surrender would be sure to reach Gloucester. He would have to face it in his old haunts. He would not spoil his feat. No, no. He waved at the barque. The sailors looked on him as addle-witted, but they talked of him the rest of the passage. She left him, her stern lifting crazily to the scend of the sea.

He weathered the breeze. It was a snorting time with a great sea under the dory. Sleep was impossible, night a time for every sense to be strained, all vigilance and no rest. Black nights, crashing streaks of white water, and the endless lift and shoot of the



dory that wrung flesh and bone. A good man to keep his head in that! Not that Johnson boasted about it. He took it all as a fisherman would. A breeze, that was all. Nothing to mind in a big vessel, but pretty lively. He finally lowered his mast and put out a sea anchor, a floating drogue. He gave it a long shot of line and his tired arms had to struggle with the tiller no more. She rode high then, saucy little witch. She was tight and she was getting lighter every day as his supplies were consumed. She weathered the breeze and took to her path again, a sea goer that had courage to her credit.

The weather cleared. It was the sixteenth of July then. He'd been gone a month. The sun came out and he shed bit by bit his dank, sodden clothing, drying it out. The warmth crept through his body. He stretched luxuriously. The Atlantic was not done, oh no, but the moment of kindness was best taken for its full value. Johnson dry was a heartier man. He made what shift of his supplies he could, trying to air them. As the wind fell light he left the hatch open most of the day, sweetening his craft. She was a clean-sailing boat, but when he had been thirty-three days out he found he did not know her ways entirely.

A German passenger ship longed to rescue him. He had followed the ship lane and almost daily a ship was spoken. They always came down to rescue him, and he always said no, he was not wrecked, just a sailing fool on his way to England. Blank faces looked down from bridge and quarter-deck, shoulders shrugged. Why a man so desperately astray would not be rescued they failed to understand. The German ship came down when it was almost calm. She ran close and the passengers lined the deck cheering and waving. The skipper hailed from the bridge to know if he could do anything. Johnson cudgelled his sea-



confused wits for something he needed. It didn't take very long before he answered.

"Well, since you are so kind, Captain, I wouldn't mind having a bottle of brandy."

The case he had started with had long since been emptied. The Germans tied the bottles to a plank and threw it overboard. Johnson was eager for those bottles. They spelled fire for the stomach and comfort for tired, cramped muscles. He was a sailor. He knew he was not yet done with the fury of the sea. He waved his thanks and made for the plank. He was so cramped and so zealous that when he reached out for the bottles he nearly upset the dory, almost toppling over on the plank. As he put it, he was a bit stiff. A man's legs got no chance in a dory. No. He got the bottles, but he hurt his pride. He thought he knew how to behave in his little craft. Perhaps too, he felt a little ashamed of making the *Centennial* look foolish before the big German ship. After that he was more than ever cautious in working up his supplies at the amidship hatch. There were still many miles of sea road to the end of his voyage and he was looking toward success.

Then came the wind southwest again, and it blew a great breeze suddenly. The sea was almost calm until it began, when a steep wind-sea such as one usually finds in coastal bays got up in two hours. It had no foot to it and was dangerously steep, lifting to angry crests. There was a wild lashing there, past mid-ocean, yet so far from land. The *Centennial* took on a motion that was as ungentle as the curvet of a horse that hasn't felt the spur to rouse him out of his fancy, nor a strong hand at his mouth. She seemed to fall in all directions at once and no matter where she fell there was a cruel devil of a sea waiting to give

her a buffet. And the wind blew. Johnson was afraid of losing his sails, so he took them in. It was as well, for the dory could not be put at anything. He got out her roding and rigged her sea anchor, a floating drogue of very modest size. In the midst of all this hurry a sea took the dory a dirty bang, and there nearly ended the journey of Alfred Johnson.

Weak of legs, the drunken lurch of his little ship flung him against the edge of his water cask. The steel hoop bit savagely into his skull and he lost all interest in the ports of England and all else beside. He sagged down into his steering well and the drogue lugged at the head of his dory, and the wind sheered it off while she bounced from crest to crest with the short sweep of a white gull, for she could lay to. Ah, but she rode them out then, dizzy swoops on the slack of her roding, showers of spray from under her nose when she set back. All the while Johnson lay a huddled heap in his steering well, and she bearing him up and fighting every minute of the day that fell to dusk, and into the night that came on blustering, although by then the seas were lengthening out, and the wind steadying, so the dory rode as safe as a church.

Sometime in the death watch Johnson stirred and sat up, when he could untangle himself. He had some doubts about being still in the land of the living, but the spatter of the flying spray was convincing. He was still in the maze of water between the worlds. He winced and brushed his eyes clear. Being a man of hard head he accepted the situation gracefully. A man of imagination might have thought of a thousand things to drive him mad in such an awakening. His head throbbed convincingly, and the bump had the splendid protuberant aspect of a recently acquired injury. He was no stranger to a broken head. As his

wits sharpened, and as he looked about with an eye to taking charge, he realized the wind was falling off. The clouds were light and moving lazily across the stars. Nevertheless, he was glad to see the sun come up clear and without too much color. Calm and restful, that sunrise. There was hope there. If ever he got out of this mess he would have a tale to tell and most of it to the credit of the *Centennial*. She was a good boat. He feebly crawled forward to get in the drogue. It was time he was on his way to England.

He spoke ships daily. By then he had found it very difficult to get a good shot at the sun from his pitching little vessel. The water made a blur of his reckoning when he tried to work up a sight. He let the ships he spoke do his navigating for him. It was a great wonder that he was not run down in the dark. In 1876 not all ships carried side lights. Miserly owners resented the burning of the oil. Johnson slept at night when he could, and yet he told of no close calls from collision. Ships that passed were always interested, always keen to do anything they could for him, but his canned food sufficed for his needs. The only favor he asked was knowledge of his position and that was usually given cheerfully.

A warm sun and fair wind helped him until the second of August. He was three hundred miles west of Cape Clear by then. There he spoke the brig *Maggie Gander* bound from New York to Swansea. Her old man was enchanted by the sight of the plucky dory man. He shortened sail to keep company. For more than two hours they sailed in consort, the tiny venturer's ship and the bluff ended Swansea brig, stable as a house, solid under the feet of her people. They urged him as usual to give over and come aboard, but he only laughed, although the sea

and wind were getting up again. The two parted when Johnson thought best to heave to. He unshipped the mast and made all snug.

Let a dory fall off into the trough of a sea and she has no weatherly qualities. The *Centennial* was light by now, the supplies were getting low. Johnson had eaten well on his way over. He had lost no weight in spite of the constant drain upon his energies of going without sleep and being continually wet. The brig had gone on and left him. A half hour after she left, the dory got broadside to a breaking sea which pushed her down and rolled her, capsizing her sharply. Johnson's life line proved its worth. A man cannot expect to climb on a dory bottom and only get his feet wet. Johnson went down until the line caught him, then he tackled the problem of his swamped boat. He had to wait until a specially favoring sea arrived to help him roll her over. For twenty minutes he hung on, waiting. Then, a roaring, spouting monster charged down upon them. With its aid he righted her, climbed in and began to bail for his life. Water logged, she teetered crazily under him. It was three o'clock in the afternoon. In that northern latitude he had six hours of daylight to make out of the sodden wreck a sea-worthy, light-footed dory. First, he must get the salt water back where it belonged. He pumped with one hand and bailed with the other, while every sea swept him. Wedging his body into the corner of his steering well to keep out all the water he could, he fought for his life, only leaving off for a more urgent matter.

Looking over the side he saw a shark, cheated of its meal, charge at the thin planks of the dory. It turned on its side and with a malicious champing of teeth dived beneath the boat. Johnson felt it strike the flat keel beneath his feet. He lashed his

knife to an oar and thrust savagely at the brute which, discouraged, went about its business.

The breeze grew, but so did the bailing. The *Centennial* rose from a water-logged wreck, her decks awash, to a tight, proper craft. Before dark came she was headed to the sea riding safely to her drogue. Johnson's teeth beat a tattoo from the chill of the wind. He took stock of his equipment. He had saved the unshipped mast and his rudder. That put heart into him. The *Centennial* was not yet a derelict. The square sail had washed overboard and was lost. The alcohol stove had gone to the bottom. His water was spoiled. His bread was a sodden mass, but the tinned supplies were still under the amidship hatch which had stood the strain of the capsize. The night was pitch black before he had gotten his gear straightened out. Then he huddled down into the steering well crouched low to keep out the wind. He was thankful to have come out of it so well. To-morrow would be another day.

His to-morrow was not a prize day. The dawn was cold and grey. The wind had blown itself out. It began to rain. The sea went down, ironed into smooth-backed hills by the downpour. It was a dirty morning, a dirtier afternoon, and it grew no better at night for the rain fell in torrents. Johnson had a bite of tinned food and finished the last of the brandy the friendly German had sent him over the side. For the rest, he waited and shivered. It rained four days almost without wind. He got his drogue in and set sail, but he only slatted about. Then, when the rain gave over, the fog settled. It was difficult to tell which was harder to bear, the sharp pelting of the rain sheets or the monotony of the drip from spars and shrouds, the splash of idle drops upon the gleaming, sea-ried deck. There was nothing



dry in Johnson's world, but it pleased him to try his pump from time to time by way of something to do. Its hearty gurgle as it sucked was music to his ears in the silence that needed lifting. The *Centennial* was tight; that was no slight comfort amid the torturing check to his passage. Roaring wind deadens the senses, until the mind grows swiftly too weary to think, but flat, wet weather sobers the spirit to a loutish thing, making a man into a fishy-eyed ghoul staring idly into the greyness.

On Monday, the seventh of August, the fog broke. Johnson steered mechanically. After what he had been through there was no enthusiasm left in him. He watched a vessel standing down toward him. Another of those coasting brigs, he thought, but where was the coast? He began to doubt the very existence of England. He had sailed all his life, he would have to sail forever. The vessel came close and spoke him. She was the brig *Alfredon* from Liverpool for Baltimore. Johnson acted rather dazed. He scarcely answered their hail, but presently, he collected his wits enough to ask that his water cask be filled and that they send down any bread they could spare. This repaired two of the most serious losses of his capsized. At last, as the dory drew away, he asked where he was, only to hear he was one hundred miles off Cape Clear. Steadily he sailed on that night without bothering to sleep, and on the next day he fumbled about amidship and broke out his lead line. Meanwhile, the fog shut in again, but the wind was kind. He undertook soundings that evening and got bottom, so felt sure he was south of Cape Clear, working past Ireland toward the elusive England. It was blind work, and he had no glimpse of land to help, but when, after midnight, he had slipped into deep water again he felt secure.

On August 9 he had an anxious time of it. All the clear-



ances of St. George's Channel and out of Bristol came down upon him. Ships, ships sliding down in silence through the thick weather, hooting their way along, great lurching shadows when seen, chimeras of a nightmare when only heard. There was not much Johnson could do but listen. His boat might escape being capsized, but in a collision the dory was but a fragile egg shell. It was as dangerous to lay to as it was to hold his course and speed. Grim terror waited behind every wraith and fog shape. For a bold navigator who had fought gamely from the start, luck was certainly sad at the end. The west coast of England is a hard bit to a stranger, and the weather promised a landfall in a fog, perhaps the booming of surf about the foot of some unknown cliff, or the sudden splintering crash upon a saw toothed reef. Johnson was anxious.

Then like the ghost of a clipper came the *Prince Lombardo* out of the fog. She was a full rigged ship, all tapered grace aloft and sweeping sheer over the deck. Johnson hailed quickly. The phantom might fade in a moment; there is no learning the vagaries of sea fog. It has its own echoes, its own over tones, all the secrets of unknown phenomena.

"Wexford Head fifty-three miles, east by north."

"East by north," answered Johnson hollowly. "Fifty-three miles, thank you and a good voyage."

For the rest of the day he asked himself repeatedly if he had ever heard of such a course. He consoled himself that he could not have created it. He had never heard of Wexford Head, but he found it on his chart to be in Ireland beyond Tuskar Rock. The chart scarcely held together after its soaking, but he managed to lay off a course bearing east by north to Wexford Head, and measure back upon it fifty-three miles. He hastened to make a

smudge there to mark his position. That done he took off the course across St. George's Channel. The weather cleared in the night and the wind rose to a breeze, but it was a friendly breath, although it showed some bent to come round and turn head wind. Johnson steered, looking up at the stars. He would not think of this being his last night at sea. There was no luck in that, as every music hall ballad from time out of mind has pointed out. Instead he wondered what the English were like, and if they would be glad to see him. He was more alone that night than when in mid ocean, for people are stranger than the sea when one does not know them.

Next day, the tenth of August, he sighted the Welsh coast about St. David's head rising half a thousand feet into the air, but the wind made good its threat and drew ahead, so he landed at Abercastle, Pembrokeshire. He had lost no weight. His watch and clock were both ruined by sea water. His legs were better than he had hoped, and the boat was still fit and saucy. He had made England.

Johnson was a man of strong mind and good memory. He had said he would sail the *Centennial* into an English port, and if Abercastle were a port, he felt sure he was a farmer. All was strange on the Welsh coast. He would push on to the one city he had heard most of, Liverpool. So, after a turn about to take the kinks out of his back and legs, he was off again on the twelfth of August, coasting this time, taking several days to get north to Holyhead and another to run off his easting to reach Mersey mouth.

About half a day out of Liverpool and still going strong, an English ship came close aboard. For a time it looked as if he would be run down until the steamer slowed and stopped. It

was a reception ship crowded with passengers. The steamer's captain carried things with a high hand. He virtually ordered Johnson to give up, saying the ship had come out for the express purpose of taking him in, but Johnson preferred his own narrow decks to the smother of the fussy passengers. Besides, he had said he would sail that dory spang into an English port, and he would, aiming as he was at the mouth of the Mersey. The two captains exchanged words of no poor power, whereby they made clear their intentions even to those unconcerned. Then Johnson sailed on, leaving the reception steamer to do what it liked. The dory slipped into Crosby Channel easily, heeling smartly to the river breeze. She passed up between the North Wall and Rock Lighthouses, kept on past New Brighton, past Liverpool, past Birkenhead itself to Rock Ferry Hotel. Then he spun the *Centennial* on her heel, doused her jibs and let her slide up to the dock. The voyage was over. The Atlantic had been outfaced by a twenty foot dory.

Down river, at the landing stage, a crowd of enthusiasts had waited for his arrival. The steamboat that had come out to meet him docked there. Alfred Johnson was a fisherman with little ability to attend to the publicity of his venture. His public would have to come to him. He put his boat on display at Rock Ferry Hotel and many came to see. P. T. Barnum made a bid for him and the boat. Johnson refused. Circus life was not for him, with its strut and gilt. He exhibited the boat, but with little actual profit. It was the twenty-first of August when he landed and the summer was well-nigh over.

He had named his boat the *Centennial* with the purpose of sailing her over and returning to exhibit her at the Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia. He had succeeded in his crossing,

but by the time he could have gotten back the exposition would have been over and as he put it to himself, "Folks had forgotten about it." Johnson found his purpose had gone astray and he was in a strange country three thousand miles from home. When he had made enough by exhibiting the boat he put her on board a steamer and went back to Gloucester. He crossed the three thousand miles of sea in comfort, marvelling at his own exploit. "I sailed her right into Liverpool Harbor, but I was a mighty big fool to do it. I think I have had enough of it." There was his final opinion of his courageous success.

He was very modest about it all with the fisherman's instinct to avoid being made a hero. "No adventure," he was always fond of saying. "No adventure, at all. It wasn't so bad. No more dangers or hardships than you might come up with any time out with the fishing fleet. I got a little lonesome after the first month, that was all."

So he went back to Gloucester; the eye of the public was easier to bear there. They were his people, these plain, single-minded folk who did men's work and took their tragedies so bravely. He settled down to work again, to the work he knew, going out with the bankers, standing by his dory mates, working hard when the fish were good, idling hopefully when the fish were bad, but reeling off voyage after voyage, especially in the winter fishing.

He became a well-known halibut killer, and in time earned for himself a berth as a skipper and the means to retire, under the burden of the years, to the pleasure of gamming, and the giving of advice in the fashion of seafaring ancients the world over.

In his old age he haunted the room of the Master Mariners' Association in Gloucester and took to playing bridge with all the acumen he had once given to bolder affairs. However, Gloucester

never forgets its own. Few of its men ever make old bones, but when they do, their past belongs to the town, a loyal place of warm blood and strong opinions. Johnson had brought them pride. *Centennial—Gloucester*—he had not forgotten the town in his lone voyage, and in his old age, even when he reached the reflective eighties, the townsmen still called the rotund, jolly little man by the name that was at once his pride and his reward—Centennial Johnson.

In death he is still a tradition, where the past is full of heroes and of the grand talk of true adventure met in honest work, a remembered figure in the tapestry of the long sea fight.





  
OR'S PARADISE

A GOOD BOAT IS A SAIL-

—*Captain Thomas Crapo.*



---

#### IV: BOUND OUT FOR THE LAND OF ROSES: *Captain Thomas Crapo*

☆☆☆ WHEN A MAN'S WHOLE LIFE IS THE DELIBERATE PURSUIT of romance, he has the fire of the Gods in his blood. Thomas Crapo began his casual search after adventure at fourteen. He had been bent upon a start for a long time, but he waited until he had not only an opportunity to run away from home, but a chance to join an outward bound whaler. It was natural for a New Bedford boy to go whaling. From the time he could understand anything he heard little else among the men of the town. It was a desperate game with failure as common as success, a game of extremes. Crapo was thankful to sign on even as a cabin boy. In the lazy way of a whaler he was carried to the Azores. He thrilled at the sight of fantastic Pico rising from the sea, or the feel of foreign soil to boyish feet strutting the streets of Horta. Whalers took such things casually, but their cabin boys were probably not so cold-blooded, and every port of call the leisurely vessels touched was sheer adventure to Crapo.

Yet, sedate as was the progress of his ship, she served up to the New Bedford runaway all manner of new things. When he was fifteen he rounded the Horn and saw Honolulu open beyond Diamond Head. By then he had begged the captain to make him a whaleman, and so had gone forward out of the cabin, and had begun a man's work. He learned how to make Marquesan *poi*, and landed at Robinson Crusoe's island, where he found many

goats and the cave of the castaway. By the time he was sixteen he had deserted and been shanghaied by an American square-rigger which carried him to London and dumped him upon the docks with twenty-five dollars for pay. In time, he found a ship and worked his way back to New Bedford, only to see men marching off to the call of the first bugles of the Civil War.

That was Crapo's fortune. He did not have to pursue adventure. All his life, after his youthful running away, it came to meet him. In his leisurely, whaleman fashion, he joined the navy, just in time to be sent from the receiving ship to Farragut's own *Hartford*. He was with her when she forced the mouth of the Mississippi and passed up to Vicksburg, carrying the river-fighting through the heart of Dixie. Without apparently lifting a hand to bring about a transfer, he found himself in the gunboats on the Red River expedition. He turned soldier for a time and at the end of the war came home to New Bedford. By just following the drift of things, and doing what he found at hand, he had been in the centre of things from the start and had earned a war record to be proud of. Once peace came, he took to deep water voyaging, sailing to South American ports, to the West Indies and the Mediterranean. At Buenos Ayres a steamboat sank and young Crapo went down to her in a diving suit to determine the damage. For another, that would have been the end of the matter. For Crapo it was a gateway to other salvage work as an experienced diver at good wages, but he tired of it and found a barque in need of a second mate waiting to carry him to Havre.

At thirty-one he took out his first mate's papers and married Miss Joanna Styff of Glasgow. His bride was a woman well fitted for life with a restless sailor. She was Swedish on her



father's side and English on her mother's. From her early childhood she had lived in the amazing port of Marseilles. It was no great change for her to go to sea with her husband, after she got over the initial touch of sea sickness. She saw sea life as it was, not from the viewpoint of a passenger, but intimately, as she could in a sailing ship. Even a shipwreck did not drive her ashore. She came to understand why Thomas Crapo would go on roving to the day of his death. The thousand-faced sea spoke to her as was only natural to her blood, and she took to the ships as easily as another would have changed her hotel. Crapo carried her with him to England and on into the Baltic. Nothing less than a knife thrust, received as he broke up a forecastle fight, drove them home to New Bedford while Crapo completed his recovery.

While stranded at New Bedford the sailor went into the fish business. He found the ways of people ashore were not his. He lacked the ability to see and take advantage. He made out sadly and sold the business before he had lost all his savings. He went to work in a junk store; he would content himself ashore as best he could, at least until he was quite himself again. New Bedford would not have it. In the bustle of the works, where whaling ships were equipped with the thousand-fold necessary gear, every word was of the sea. Who came home with a record lay? For what whale-boat crew were the new stones going up in the graveyard? They told how some owner paid off a man with an iron boy, the whaler's name for a lone silver dollar, the skinflint, and of the whale which, with four irons of the *Montezuma* fast in him, had gotten away. There was no balm in such speech for the old restlessness. Crapo could not go to sea and could not settle down. Daily he heard of the strength and won-

der that he knew, until he ached to be off again. It was time for him to use his brains. There was no fortune to be earned at work in a junk shop.

If he had to stay ashore for a time he would play with an idea that has come to many sailors, the perfect small boat. Crapo had no doubts about the matter in general. He knew the New Bedford whale-boat to be practically ideal. Its flat floor carried well out into the ends gave a fast and able hull. Being double-ended she dragged very little water and could scarcely be pooped by a sea. He had some pet ideas which he put into a design of his own. He walked over the bridge to Fish Island, to the yard of Samuel Mitchell. Mitchell built a good boat, and could be trusted to follow plans. The builder did not ask what she was to do when built, and Crapo went back to his junk shop keeping his own counsel.

When the boat was set up she proved to be nineteen feet, seven inches long, with a beam of six feet, two inches and a depth of thirty inches. She was rigged as a double cat on a plan not unlike the old Block Islanders. Her foremast was twenty-one feet six inches long and her main only twenty-feet six inches. Fifteen yards of light duck went into the foresail, and ten into the mainsail, both leg of mutton rig. Crapo spoke of her as his schooner-dory-boat. To the people of New Bedford she looked like a whale-boat, which she undoubtedly was, from her photographs. She was entirely decked in save for two scuttles, both eighteen by twenty-four inches, covered, when desired, by sliding hatches. When she was finished Crapo went out and looked her over critically. He was well pleased and said so frankly. Then he went back to the junk shop and quit. When his employers wanted to know why, he said he was going to sea.

Once idle, he startled New Bedford by announcing he was going to cross the ocean in his just-finished boat. He spent his time at Mitchell's yard beside his little beauty. The townfolk flocked to Fish Island to find him fastening water tanks in place for the long voyage. Meanwhile, Mrs. Crapo grew more and more anxious about the venture until at last she frankly announced that if he were going she, too, would go. Crapo took that reflectively. He knew his wife's courage for he had seen it tried in bad weather. Once she had been with him in a collision. When she asked an officer how much damage had been done them he barked, "I shouldn't wonder if the whole stern is stove in."

"Well in that case we won't be here very long," she countered and went on deck in the night to hold a lantern, that the man at the wheel might see the compass, since the binnacle-lamp had been broken in the collision. She was a cool one, and up to the passage, if she could stand the exposure in such cramped quarters. Crapo scratched his head and nodded knowingly. She would do—but—then he would go back over it all again. Would she? He wished he had known about it earlier. The boat was built for one and it was too late to change. He got both his wife and himself aboard, while the ship lay in the slip, figuring how she would carry them both. He guessed, even so loaded, she would only draw thirteen inches. That left a generous free board. He bowed to his wife's intention. Mrs. Crapo should be the first woman to cross the Atlantic in so small a boat.

In New Bedford people had been interested before, but the new turn of affairs brought the entire town over to Fish Island. Women came to see Mrs. Crapo, some to dissuade her from her folly, some to admire her courage, others out of curiosity at what kind of sea-monster she might be. News of the voyage travelled

far. The New York *Times* wrote an editorial upon the matter. A man and his wife living so close to one another for so long was unthinkable. They would be very unhappy. The conclusion of the editorial was a prediction of failure: the journey would not be made, the travellers were pictured as returning to the starting place after a short absence, when the husband would spring to land and make straight for Siberia; and the wife would rush to torrid zones with at least equal rapidity, after, perhaps, having one final claw at the departing mariner. It was queer to hear the *Times* talking about torrid zones as if they existed in multiple, yet there was a flavor of truth about the general idea, but the *Times* for once did not have all the news. They were not intimately acquainted with the Crapos, who paid no heed to them or anyone else, but went on with the preparation to sail.

Crapo put aboard ninety pounds of biscuit, seventy-five pounds of canned meats, and tanks to hold one hundred gallons of fresh water. Tea, coffee, sugar, were added to the cargo. New Bedford people opened their hearts to the undertaking, after they got over the strangeness of it. One friend presented a drogue and line, another a generous bit of extra canvas. Captain Seabury carried an honest whaler's compass all the way to the island and added a candle lantern with a stock of candles, and two charts. Crapo had decided it was useless to try to carry a chronometer. He had no way to care for it that would even give the instrument half a chance, and no one knew better how little use a chronometer was unless it could be depended upon. He would rather trust to his dead reckoning and to speaking passing vessels.

On the sailing day there was still plenty to be done. All day the wharf was thronged with those who came to see the beginning of this mad business. Crapo took himself up to the

custom house to see about clearance. He came back with the following:

*Custom House, New Bedford, Mass.,  
Collector's Office,  
May 28, 1877.*

Captain Thomas Crapo and his wife, both of this city, being about to sail from this port in a boat called the "New Bedford," measuring 1 62/100 tons, bound for London, England, requests me to give him a letter, as, on account of the small size of his vessel, I cannot issue "marine documents."

I, therefore, desire to make known to "all whom it may concern" that Captain Crapo is well known here, and his purpose is entirely legitimate, and he has the good wishes of this community that his voyage may be successfully accomplished.

J. A. P. ALLEN,  
Collector of Customs.

All was activity about the *New Bedford*. Women were trying to persuade Mrs. Crapo to give up the idea and remain ashore. Crapo's old father cried and wrung his hands. "The two foolish children, I shall never see them again," he said over and over. Crapo, annoyed at the pitiful behavior of his father, and out of patience with those who at the last minute tried to turn Mrs. Crapo from her purpose, stowed the last of their supplies as quickly as possible, cast off the wharf-line and the voyage had begun. The yachts at anchor fired a salute, as the *New Bedford* passed. The escort of sailing craft that got under way with her crowded the little ship, so anxious were they to be close to adventure and romance.



The last minute confusion had left everything in a heap aboard the boat, so Crapo decided to run in at Vineyard Haven for the night. When he found the bilge water was close up under his floor he was all the better pleased at his choice. The *New Bedford* did nicely in the afternoon souther. This was the first time her skipper had sailed her. He had been too much pushed for time to get in a trial trip. The newness of the boat was, queerly enough, the reason for her leaking. She had not been in the water long enough to swell tight. At Vineyard Haven they made a good job of their stowage. Stopping the night to dry out their bedding, they were met in the morning by the Rev. L. R. Wait, who wished them a good voyage and gave Mrs. Crapo a letter to be read when they were on the open sea. A solemn business to be a minister in Vineyard Haven where the graveyards are filled with stones that are "in memory" only, and the carven words end over and over again in "lost at sea." A good man's thought, that letter, sending comfort with the daring.

Flag flying, a long fish-tailed burgee bearing the name of the boat *New Bedford* in bold capitals, they crossed to Chatham at the southern heel of Cape Cod. Everyone seemed to know about them, both in vessels they passed and at Chatham. They got into the shallows making the harbor, but did not hurt the boat. While there they got a carpenter to make the coamings of the two hatchways higher and put in two hundred pounds of iron as ballast. By the second of June they were ready to sail again. A Captain Taylor considerably paid a very decent compliment to his faith in Crapo. This Chatham captain had a son in Liverpool, England. He gave them two letters to that son, asking him to mail them when they reached England. He did it quietly, as one officer of the pilot cloth might ask a favor of another, a bracing



gesture to the two who would see no more land for many weary days, if ever, and who would have to live all that time upon their own confidence. Crapo started with three ringing cheers in his ears. They were off at last.

Of all voyagers who braved the Atlantic crossing, Thomas Crapo seems to have been the most surprised at what the journey really was like. His sea going had all been done in large vessels with a ship routine of regular watches. Even when whaling he was usually able to see the ship's masts somewhere on the horizon from the boat busy about the chase, and once aboard again, and the whale cut in, time passed smartly enough. On the *New Bedford* all was surprise. First, he marvelled at their lack of shelter. Sun, wind, rain, there was no cabin to go to, no sense of comfort at the sound of a boarding sea and a tight deck over one's head. Then too, he was astonished to see how small the *New Bedford* had grown. When Mrs. Crapo crawled in under the deck she had to sleep with her feet on a water cask, and if she wanted to turn over she had first to rise, and lie down anew. Time seemed inexhaustible. There were no four-hour tricks. Crapo passed the whole of the first night at the tiller. He had a three-knot breeze and the boat slid along easily enough needing very little helm. Overhead he had the awful loneliness of the stars, the vast sky depths that a man admires and then wonders at, and presently finds a sense of awe fingering his pulse on the way to stark terror. Crapo missed the hum of cordage, the vague stir of life about shadowy decks, the hustle of the changes of the watch, the crisp passing of the word following upon the old man's command. He sat and steered, prying his eyelids open with thumb and finger, struggling to keep awake. The work before departure had been hurried. The reaction was almost overcoming. At last, the night

ended. Crapo never heard so cheerful a sound as the voice of his wife bidding him good-morning. In every direction there swept only the sea rim. He called it a "dreary waste" to himself, but he replied very heartily to Mrs. Crapo's greeting. Suppose, it flashed through his mind, suppose he had come alone. He shivered at the thought and by that time the sun was up, a soft, golden morning.

The Crapos had one fear beside the ever present dangers of the sea. They had not planned to do extensive cooking on board, but they had brought a lamp-stove which burned oil. The possibilities of an explosion with the fire breaking out under the deck was terrifying to think about. To minimize the danger they only put a gill of oil in the stove at a time, and one of them held it in position upon the floor while the cooking was going forward. There was no room to get out of each other's way while preparing meals, but their sense of humor helped. They joked and chuckled over the situation and managed rather well, except that at the end of his first twenty-six-hour trick Crapo would have given a good deal for a chance to really stretch his legs. Still, fire hazards, fatigue and all, they felt they were doing nicely.

Over the bow lay the land of roses, although a long way off. On June 4 they came up with the schooner *A. J. Chapman* fishing on George's Bank. It is seldom smooth in those waters and the *New Bedford* had taken on a quick, uneasy motion. There is no rest for flesh and blood in a small boat at sea. Every wave climbed means an accommodation of balance, endless flexing of muscles that soon spells fatigue and sometimes a peculiarly violent sea sickness. It is this incessant work thrust upon the body that wears the single-hander down. By the end of the fourth day Mrs. Crapo was both very nervous and unwell. Crapo was

tired, but still steering each night until sunrise and sleeping then until eight in the morning, when he returned to the sailing. They were meeting a great many Mother Cary's chickens, but aside from these stormy petrels saw practically no other life. The trip had fallen into a grey monotony.

It was then they opened the letter of the Vineyard Haven minister. It was a cheering, homely reminder that while they were fighting their way across, they were remembered in the prayers of millions and were as much in the hands of God at sea as anywhere in life. There was a rugged sincerity about the letter and the Crapos talked about it far into the night, twisting and turning the matter to their fancy.

By June 7 the *New Bedford* had sailed two hundred ninety miles out of the three thousand three hundred of the track to Falmouth, which port Crapo hoped first to make. So far, the weather had been good, but that very day they ran into fog. A large school of sperm whales came along blowing merrily, so that the vapor of their spouting sprayed across the boat. Crapo knew sperm whales and he was frightened. He knew they had very small eyes so set they could only see on each side. Head on, they were blind, and the chance of them hitting the *New Bedford* seemed entirely too good. Still worse, if one should rise under the boat, they would be left to die in the foggy dark, for the whale would probably thrash the boat to bits in surprise and fear. They passed fortunately, without doing any harm and the captain had no urge to call them back.

The fog held. It rained half a day and the fog settled back. It blew until the sea seemed mountain high and the *New Bedford* was hove to riding at her drogue, but when the wind fell the fog came down too. Crapo got under way as carefully as he could,

holding a course in blindness. He wore out his fog horn and had to sit and listen to ships about him with no way of answering. When at last, on June 18, it lifted, the wind grew to a gale.

Crapo was astonished at the predicament in which he found himself. He had never believed a small boat could live in such weather. When he sank into the trough the sea ahead was a wall, and that behind an avalanche, yet the *New Bedford* would climb patiently to the top and shoot dizzily ahead to the next abysmal trough. A steamer in those seas would have laid them open like a plough, flinging the spray high in the air to spatter upon the weather-cloth on the bridge. The *New Bedford* had to meet each sea as a single adversary to be overcome and failure meant the end of the cruise and the overwhelming of all hands.

He ran as long as he dared. He used his foresail for this work, smothering his mainsail into stops, and when he either dared run no longer, or grew too weary to hold his eyes open, he put out his drogue and hove to.

The drogue was too small to hold her well into the teeth of wind and sea. Crapo had a fortunate find. He came upon a keg adrift in the sea. From this he cut the hoops with his hatchet and to these hoops he sewed a cone of canvas. He had lashed three hoops into one to give strength and rigged leads to them like the bails of a water pail, two of them, at right angles to each other. Reeving off a line five fathoms longer than the regular drogue line, he put over both the old and new drogues and found the boat held nicely. It was not entirely restful, lying to a drogue. He tended the lines carefully. When a sea larger than usual roared down upon them he pulled smartly on the drogue line. This gave them temporary headway and prevented the sea from taking charge as it passed. It was anxious work and tedi-

ous. Crapo would rather have been under full sail headed for the land of roses.

So far he had had no accidents, not a sail lost, but there came a morning when he had to go forward in a flurry of wind to clear his halliards on the foremast. As he came aft again, the boat lurched and threw him into the steering cockpit. His foot struck the glass of his compass, shattering it into a thousand pieces. He forgot his fall in his anxiety to see what he had done. The card was unhurt, the point and jewel untouched, not even a single one of the silk threads that held the card was broken. He forgot his bad luck in his happiness at the little damage. To keep the water out of the bowl he sacrificed two pieces of glass from his lantern, from which he fashioned a cover. His robbed lantern he repaired as best he could with canvas. It could no longer show a light in all directions but his compass was his life; the lantern had to suffer.

He was fairly in the ship lane. He spoke a fisherman on the Grand Banks and the British barque *Amenori*, both in one day. They gave him his longitude as 50.01 W. and sent a rousing cheer after him in passing. Most of his navigation was by dead reckoning. He was meeting plenty of rain and wind, and thunder storms that frightened him by the brilliance of the lightning. The journey had entirely lost the monotony of the first few days.

On the twenty-fourth of June he spoke the steamer *Batavia*. Five months later in New York he had dinner with her skipper and the mate gave him a drawing of how the *New Bedford* looked hove to, at the time of the mid-ocean meeting. The voyagers had done one thousand one hundred forty miles at the time, and were settling nicely to the task. Mrs. Crapo had gotten bravely over her sea sickness, and while both were short of sleep,



they asked for nothing from the steamer but the favor of being reported.

They had trouble with the fresh water. Water stowed in the tanks and shut off from the air became stringy, taking on an unhealthy color and odor, and thickening to a molasses-like mass. The frequent rain drenched the voyagers and worked its way below. The bedding was wet and what extra clothing they had, but they took the ducking in good part for it enabled them to catch a pitcher of fresh water, sweet rain water that was badly needed. For an emergency the tanked water would do, but that was in the future while the pitcher could be made to serve.

Working their way over in company with a few stray gulls, the porpoises and a dallying sunfish, three feet across the back, meeting fair weather and foul as determinedly as possible, they fell in with the Bremen barque *Amphitrite* from Bristol, England, to Quebec, Canada. The captain had his wife aboard by way of a honeymoon, and nothing would do but the Crapos must come aboard. Only two days before a Swansea brig had offered to tow them in, but Crapo had declared he was not crossing the ocean that way. Whatever the charm employed, this westbound barque met with greater favor. The Crapos were dying to stretch their legs without kicking a biscuit tin, or fouling the coil of a sheet, or upsetting the stove. For twenty-six days they really had lived on a floor space of less than two feet square. The chance to walk a deck was heaven. The barque's yards were hauled aback to kill her way, and men were sent down into the *New Bedford* to fend her off the *Amphitrite's* side. Relieved, both mentally and physically of all strain, the Crapos stayed to dinner and had their first carefree hour since they had left Chatham. When the dinner was over Captain Geares of the *Am-*



*phitrite* sent down wine and fresh water to the whale-boat, and all too soon the voyagers were back at their grind, wondering if the dinner had been a dream, and if they were awake or asleep.

There was one very strong element of reality in the experience to Thomas Crapo. He had noticed while striding about the barque's deck that her compass and his own varied two points. Two points might put him anywhere. It was sure to throw him farther south than England by his calculations. However, he was forearmed by then, and bad shipmate that an unreliable compass may be, it was only something to be regarded suspiciously. They would make the land of roses yet.

The next day the *New Bedford* had a race with the barque *Pool Scar*. At first, the barque was beaten by two miles, but then the wind hauled up northwest and filled her press of sail till she roared by with a following wind and a frothing wake. There was the usual humor of pretending to throw a tow line and shouted wise cracks lost in the hiss of her passing, but Crapo was glad for the fellowship. It was dangerous to be in such heavily-populated waters at night, but in daytime it was tonic.

This press of passing ships was rapidly turning into a parade. The English barque *Ontario* dropped in for lunch on a westward passage and contributed a keg of water. When the fourth of July was gone, without the firing of a single gun, up came a Norwegian barque *Honor* bound for Ireland, just a little late for breakfast. Her master gave their longitude as 29.30 W. and invited them to come on board, and when that was refused, offered to give them anything there was in the Norwegian, and remembering Ireland was waiting, drifted away in a burst of cheers. The next morning at ten the steamer *Denmark* came up very efficiently and stopped her engines. After a shout of warning she heaved a

line to the *New Bedford*, and when the boat had been drawn up alongside, the crew passed down provisions unsolicited and in obedience to orders. A keg of water was lashed to the mainmast. Captain Williams gave Crapo his longitude as 27.26 W. and the *Denmark* was off again. The people of the *New Bedford* had become so used to other ships being about by then, that even at night they passed quite contentedly within a quarter mile of a steamer's red light.

The weather had grown better in July, but the *New Bedford* was not to escape without another lashing or so. The Atlantic is usually at least a possible place during the summer, although the winters are bad going. Gales, rain, fog had been the plucky little boat's lot ever since those first five days when the sunrise so pleased the voyagers. The passage was as rough as one in winter, although of course not so cold. On July 14 heavy squalls set in and the weather was not again well cleared until just at the end of the cruise. Only one phase of it all helped them: the prevailing wind was westerly.

Mrs. Crapo was taken deathly sick on the fifteenth. The change from canned fruit to the fresh meat and vegetables the *Denmark* had sent on board was too much for her. Crapo himself was worn very badly. He had slept only four hours every twenty-four for days. There was nothing he could do for Mrs. Crapo but give up. The sea was getting rough fast, so that it was hard to keep the boat alive. The bedding was mouldy, wet and very thin, so Mrs. Crapo could find no comfort. At seven o'clock on the morning of the sixteenth, a Bremen barque spoke them, offering to take them off. Crapo looked down at his wife, looked at the seas breaching across the weather-stained scuttles. He was all gentleness for his wife, he was all trust in the *New Bedford*. He had

suffered much. No summer passage had been like this to his knowledge. As he lifted to the pull of his drogue he waved good-bye to the barque and she scudded off before the wind.

Then, as if fate had waited, the rudder-head twisted off. Crapo looked at it wryly, but he was a fighting devil by then. He waved a Prussian brig, that came close, upon her way, and lay all night, and in the morning, when a barque passed under short sail and running, he made her no signal. He was waiting for the blow to let up that he might rig an extra rudder he had and get on about the voyage. The wind was westerly, and southwesterly and all the hours they lay to the drogue they were being borne toward the land of roses. Mrs. Crapo got always weaker, and at last she gave up hope of making the voyage. She worried the captain, then, more than his boat, but he had to stand by his tiller and drogue-line when hove to, and his tiller and sheets when sailing for she was a quick thing, the *New Bedford*, and took a lot of handling. Frightened at last, Crapo threw his seamanly care overboard, got in his sea anchor and sailed savagely for England for the sake of the woman cowering miserably under the deck. The *New Bedford* was a wild thing with a streak of white bursting from under her bows, and both sails set, when one would have brought many a skipper to heaving to. Crapo was religious. He could not know that his wife would live to reach land but he had a faith in his God. He would sail his boat while he could. If a sea swamped her, or he lost her masts, or the last rudder failed—well, he would leave those things to God as a religious seaman should. Meanwhile he was hourly driving closer to the unknown shores of England.

On the twentieth he spoke a brig *Susan*. She gave his latitude as 49.32 N. his longitude as 7.30 W., his distance from the Scilly

Islands fifty-five miles. There was no more sleep for Crapo. He met the *Susan* about noon. He put the *New Bedford* at it all that afternoon and night, nudging her over the sea miles, getting every knot he could.

Daylight on the twenty-first was foggy, a maddening thing. Couldn't the weather give him even this one last chance to get a slant? Sitting in the fog was worse than racing before the gales. He could not keep awake. At last the fog lifted. A steamer was close. Crapo hailed,

"Scilly Island?"

The steamer captain looked annoyed then pointed over the water, and Crapo, looking, saw land, land! His jaw dropped to a ghastly smile. He stooped down and spoke under the deck and a pale face lifted itself toward the sea rim and smiled too. There was a strong current against them and they dropped to leeward, but their hearts were strong now, so they clawed away at their last bit, all sand and energy. When they couldn't make Scilly Island Crapo kept off for Land's End. There the keeper of the light rang his bell and dipped his colors to them. They returned the salute and continued on into the evening. At Penzance they ran up beside a fishing boat and hailed, but there was no answer, so they made fast to her and began one of the most remarkable episodes of single-handed sailing.

Captain Crapo had sailed his boat for seventy-two hours. He was so cramped he could not straighten his fingers when he let go the tiller. Mrs. Crapo propped herself up as best she could and the captain lighted the stove to make coffee. The water came to a boil. Two figures faced the bluish-yellow flame that flickered behind the isinglass of the sooted stove door. The little coffee pot made steam of its pint of liquid, a pale white jet in

the dark. Neither figure stirred. The aroma of coffee was strong, then weaker. Slowly the bluish-yellow flame failed, puffed and went out. The coffee pot chilled, but the two voyagers still faced each other. Worry past, danger over, medical aid at hand for Mrs. Crapo, success for the captain, and both had fallen asleep before their coffee had come to a boil.

They awoke to find themselves in daylight, close under the steep Cornish shore. The lighthouse near by had never disturbed their slumbers, nor the lazy drone of wavelets among the rocks. To the north, following the sweep of the cove, lay Penzance, the square tower of St. Mary's Church and the guardian barrier reef of Chimney and Battery Rocks. Far off to the eastward lifted St. Michael's Mount. The purple shadows faded before the sun that rose clear as it had those first proud days, when Cape Cod was so close.

A fair Sunday morning, and they were really tied up at the stern of a fishing boat belonging to some British subject. It was a merry time. Mrs. Crapo was already better. The captain climbed his foremast in spite of his crippled hand and rove off his signal halliards to send aloft his colors. They drank the newly-made coffee and ate a bite by way of breakfast. When their flag had been set some time a lone man rowed off, well pleased with himself to be the first to greet them. His wife joined them at the landing where he set them ashore and she took charge of Mrs. Crapo until the doctor should arrive. Relief from worry worked almost as rapidly as medicine. The forty-nine days of adventure were past. Mrs. Crapo ate a good breakfast while the Captain enjoyed being seated at a real table again with all the comforts of a roof tree about him. The news of his arrival spread along the cliffs and up into the hills. More people came to see them than



had honored a recent visit of the Prince of Wales. Mrs. Crapo was the real heroine of the feat. Their cooking utensils were begged for as souvenirs, and many of those who received them took them to engravers and had their significance cut upon the metal.

In five days Captain Crapo sailed up to Penzance proper, showing off the paces of the *New Bedford* on the way. There he hauled out, emptied his casks of the water that, shut away from the air, had turned thick as jelly, and shipped the boat to London.

Crapo was crafty enough to know that there might be some who would doubt he had really made the voyage, so when they reached London he took his papers to the American Consulate. He rather startled the officials there with the letter given him by the Custom House people at New Bedford. They endorsed the letter as they might have regular papers.

United States Consulate General, London.

Exhibited at this Office, July 28, 1877.

J. Vining,

Vice Consul General and Shipping  
Commissioner at London.

Crapo possessed a letter from Captain John E. Moreland of the *Batavia* and the newspaper reports that had noted his position along the track of his course.

With the verification of the facts and the *New Bedford* herself, he began exhibiting at Alexander Palace, London, upon a salary basis. Questions were asked by the thousand. Several of the Royal Family came to see, putting a fashionable stamp upon



the undertaking. For six weeks Crapo did very well working from morning to night, telling the story of his exploit and holding a crowd spellbound. Then he moved to Rockferry Garden, the same place at which Johnson had exhibited the year before. There he had a more professional audience, seafaring people who came over from the twelve miles of Liverpool docks. Some returned several times to have long talks. Mrs. Crapo came into her own, the centre of admiring throngs. She was entirely well again then and quite her old self. They finished out the season at Brighton and Worthing.

In the winter Crapo hunted up Captain Robert P. Williams of the *Denmark* who had been so kind to him at sea and got the following letter. He wanted every corroboration of his trip that he could get before he went home.

*S. S. Denmark,*  
*December, 1877.*

CAPTAIN CRAPO,  
Dear Sir:

As you are now about leaving England, and some people have been skeptical as to your crossing the Atlantic in the small boat *New Bedford*, you are at perfect liberty to use my testimony as to passing you at sea on your voyage, viz.: July 7, 7.30 P. M., latitude 47.12 N.; 27.33 West.

ROBERT P. WILLIAMS,  
Master National Steamship Co.'s  
*S. S. Denmark* of Liverpool.

The Crapos came home in January, 1878, by steamer, a sixteen-day passage. They exhibited at Gilmore's Garden, the forerunner of the famous Madison Square Garden. There followed upon

that a bout of circus work. All the time they were saving money. Crapo knew his chance when he saw it. He took in the money and waited. The boat made a very good exhibition, shown as she was with all sails set. They toured the country, putting up with the vicissitudes of show life as bravely as they faced the hazards of the sea, but at heart they belonged to the sea and so they found their way back to New Bedford, bought a schooner with their earnings and lived gaily enough aboard. They had a home to their fancy, free-footed, yet comfortable. There would be no more circus stands for them. They had been to Europe and toured the United States. They would stick by the sea.

They bought and sold several vessels but they never parted from the *New Bedford*. She went with them into every ship they owned. For twenty years they followed their life of roving freedom, and then, in the loss of the brig *Manson*, when she went ashore close to the Delaware breakwater, they lost everything including the *New Bedford*.

Crapo knew only one way to revive his fortunes. He took a nine foot boat named the *Volunteer* and in this little thing, no bigger than a yacht tender, he visited Fall River, Providence, Bristol and Newport. He left Newport on the third of May, 1899, bound for Cuba, but this time he had not the *New Bedford*. The sea claimed its own. His body was washed ashore on Charleston beach and his boat was never found. It was after all a fitting end for a desperate single-hander, and as the Irish have it, "No man would be living forever." No, not even Thomas Crapo, although Mrs. Crapo left safely at home must have wished that she could have been on that last voyage, just to see the thing through, as it were, for it was a true end not to be despised, and the old devil of a sea could rightfully be proud of his victory.



VOYAGING IS VICTORY

—*Arabian Proverb*



---

## V: IT'S A LONG WAY: *A Trans-Atlantic Race*

☆☆☆ "DONE," SAID LAWLOR, OFFERING HIS HAND.

"Done," agreed Andrews, as they shook.

Prim fashions in the early nineties, stiff notions of what was fit and proper. The two men stood very straight glaring at each other in their eagerness to establish mutual virility and breathe into their just completed pact the air of convincing sincerity.

"A good breeze and a fast passage to you," said Lawlor when their martial air was exhausted.

"You'll find it a long way, but to race it will be interesting." Lawlor smiled.

"You were forty-six days before, I think?" he asked.

"Forty-five, sir, to the landing at Mullion Cove in Cornwall."

Andrews spoke of that first passage he had made in the dory *Nautilus*. She was nineteen feet long with only a rag of canvas—twenty-five yards set in a lateen sail on an eight foot mast. He and his brother had sailed in her from City Point, Boston, on Monday, June 3, 1878. He had that date by heart, it had been a lucky voyage. Ah, the days of youth. Wild work even for young blood, but splendid. He had to say something.

"You'll find it a long way," he repeated meditatively.

"A long way it is," said Lawlor and grinned.

There was another attempt in Andrew's mind.



"Were you ever stage-struck, Lawlor?"

What was wrong with this man?

"No," he said. "Were you?"

"Once, and it brought me bad luck, that and changing the name of my boat. I'd built one fifteen feet long and five beam and named her the *Mermaid*, when along came a flash gent. Says he 'Call the boat the *Dark Secret* and I'll give you five hundred down and if—just if—you should make it, you can go on the road with us at a hundred a week.' He had a real melodrama called the 'Dark Secret' and I was to advertise it. So I did, but the boat never got over. I took her to sea on June 17, just three years ago. That's the time I fought sixty-eight days and didn't get as far as Sable Island. Stage struck—I should say."

"We'll change no names."

"Good, and we won't sail on the thirteenth."

It was their pledge to race single-handed across the Atlantic that ended so. Josiah W. Lawlor went away thinking what a queer man Andrews was and Andrews, remembering his grin, decided the fellow would bear watching when they sailed.

They were going to use dories fifteen feet long. Dories are dories: there couldn't be much difference in them so long as they were of equal length. On inland or sheltered waters they prove slow sailors. They have no bilge to roll upon under sail, and can carry only the smallest of rigs. Off shore they make out as well as other small boats. The fishermen have a saying that a smack will outlive a steamer and dories will still be "staying around" when the bankers have gone to the bottom. True they are no boats to run surf with; too straight on the bottom, but at sea their lean sharpness gives them a footing. It is there they belong and it was there Lawlor and Andrews were taking them.

If experience meant anything Andrews had the edge on his rival. He had been there before, but one thing he had learned out of that. It was luck that determined whether a man got across or not, let alone beat another. They were mild-mannered men, those two who were so soon to face the sea stretches; not at all the roaring, swagger men of sea fiction.

Andrews called his dory the *Mermaid*. He wouldn't change it this time. There had been a fleet clipper of that name. He hoped his single-hander would do her credit. Besides there was a subtle witchery to the word. It was the sea; a tribute to that fanciful creation of sailors the world over, the expression of desire. Mermaids? As a good salt water man once said with tenderness in his voice, the tenderness which comes when we fondle with words the tenets of our faith, "There do be all the things in the sea there be on land: sea horses, sea elephants, sea cows, sea lettuce, and sea people." Sea people! Mermaids! Why not indeed? There was one for Andrews.

Lawlor named his dory the *Sea Serpent*. A fine two-fisted name that, smacking of Viking days. It suggests the curved prow of the Norse raiders, the memory of the slim craft lined by shields seen in fjord chasms or pitching over the short channel seas to voices chanting barbarously.

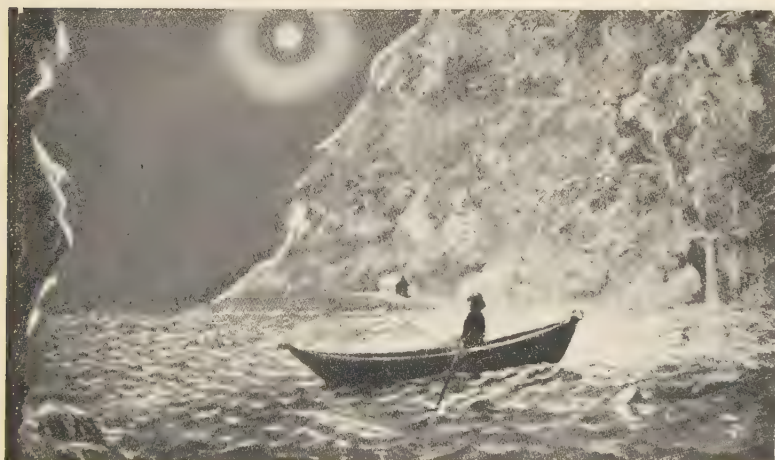
June 17, saw them off from Boston. The usual crowd gazed upon the spectacle, but the added interest of a race put the gathering in a less gloomy state of mind than was common to the spectators of other single-handed starts. The boats were slow and conditions were not so favorable, although comfortable enough. They hung pretty well together out beyond the forts, past Lovell's and Brewster's Islands, into the spread of Massachusetts Bay. They were very tiny against the far horizon. The wind then

backed them down the coast to Cohasset, not far from Scituate, but at last, coming fair, they were off in dead earnest, each man for himself.

Andrews pushed along his own idea of a track only to find Lawlor was no more anxious to keep with him than he with Lawlor. They parted company without any touching farewell, each set upon reaching England first. Andrews found his weather unusually pleasant for the first thirty-five days. He drew calm after calm as his portion from destiny. As he maundered on his way he had time to fish. He caught some three-inch mackerel. A student might have used his opportunity to learn something about that mystery fish of the sea, concerning whose habits almost nothing is known. Andrews was too impatient to enjoy his dawdling. He wanted to be on his way. He saw no more of Lawlor. His only hope was that the *Sea Serpent* was having equally light weather, but he knew that a distance of even twenty-five miles might give his opponent very different wind. Andrews was reported as having been half swamped in a washing down he got on July 12. That was his luck on this passage; to have no wind or to have a gale in which he could make no easting. On July 18, he was reported as in 43 N. and 49 W. which betrayed a slow passage with little of the dashing racing fever about it. Under a despatch of August 4, from the ship *Hafis* docking in New York from Hamburg, Captain Hulsen, came word of speaking Andrews in 45.26 N. and 41.22 W. on July 27. Andrews told him he had had a rotten passage, but he was still able to carry on and he believed he would eventually make port. At that time it was obvious the *Mermaid* was beaten. It was even suggested that the *Sea Serpent* would have time to recross the Atlantic before the *Mermaid* could reach England. It was not Andrews' race, that was all.



Welch succumbs to hunger and cold. Blackburn, with frozen hands and feet, fighting desperately for his life



Blackburn, with hands frozen to oars, rowing up Little River, N. F., after a fearful struggle of five days and nights without food or water





The 25-foot sloop *Great Republic* in which Howard Blackburn crossed the Atlantic alone



The 17-foot Dory *America* in which Blackburn made his third but unsuccessful attempt to cross the Atlantic

Lawlor sailed boldly and had too much wind rather than too little. Putting the logs of the two men side by side, one truth is evident. A trans-Atlantic race for such little boats is an event purely laid in the lap of Fortune. Both followed somewhat the same track, both boats were capable of the same speed, both men were able and active, working their craft for all there was in them.

Officer Moore, of the steamer *Queensmore*, which spoke both the racers, reported on docking in Boston on August 6, that Lawlor was eleven hundred miles ahead. The race had ceased to be a contest.

Andrews was having a tough time of it after the wind really came. Twice he was filled down and only lived by determined work, fighting for hours to get his boat clear of the water she had taken aboard, with every sea trying to fill and finish her. For two weeks in early August he was daily in desperate plight, unable to keep sail on his boat, unable to cook or sleep, and every crest threatening to wipe him out. Finally, on August 17, worn down and unable to battle longer, the *Mermaid* was tossed upon her beam's end, lay for a minute as long as life upon her side and then with a heave of the sea turned completely over. Andrews thought no more of England. Below lay the Atlantic depths. The *Mermaid* had failed him. Neither the *Nautilus* nor the *Dark Secret* had been so unfortunate. Was it the end? Should he never have made this third try? With good fortune he wallowed her over. Almost everything was gone out of her. The hammering of the seas had parted lashings, and the swashing of the water in her had completed his ruin. If Lawlor were ahead, there could be no catching him, lacking supplies. According to his reckoning he was nearly seven hundred miles from England. He staggered along five days, hopeless, and battling futilely. At last, on the twenty-



seventh, the steamer *Elbruz* came up over the horizon, spied him and he surrendered. The *Mermaid* was swung in slings and taken aboard. Instead of being bound for England, William Andrews had become a passenger for Antwerp. Once there, he sold the *Mermaid* and returned to America. It may be hoped he got more for her than Captain Voss, who sold his world circling *Tilikum* for five pounds in England. Lawlor had reached England fifteen days before Andrews surrendered.

Lawlor's journey had been uniformly windy. He was busy the first few weeks getting down to a routine and learning his boat. From day to day he drove more confidently, trying his vessel more and more, carrying all he dared. It was a long way, as Andrews had said, but every mile of it was a course for the racer. From the moment he lost sight of Andrews he sailed his own race. When he had made a good offing and settled to his work, he began his log on July 8. The weather was fair but a good breeze crowded him. On July 9, he was almost caught napping. A squall came down upon him when he was at ease. His sails were all set and he had a bad time, for while he managed to live through, for more than an hour it was touch and go. He lowered and got everything stopped down at last.

The next day he was not so lucky. The *Sea Serpent* was caught again and, in a white squall, capsized, throwing Lawlor clear. Thanks to his life line he got back to the boat. He was an hour or more righting her without losing her rig. His dory was ballasted with three hundred fifteen pounds of lead, which, with the weight of her captain, made righting possible. She came up at last, her mast faltering in a dizzy arc as she recovered. He had the good fortune to lose little by the spill, perhaps due to canny stowage, but the breeze grew without let and there was no more

sailing. After three hours hard bailing he got the *Sea Serpent* cleared, took sail off her, and hove to, riding at a sea anchor for twenty-three hours. A wild night that, but it ended at last.

On July 12, a squall threw the boat on her beam's end again. It was getting to be a habit with her. Either her reduced size had robbed her of much seaworthiness, or else Lawlor must have been asleep. She just missed sinking and she would have drowned her captain had it not been for the saving life line. He was not so fortunate at that, for in this capsize his provisions were largely spoiled by sea water. Poor Andrews would have taken half the wind and weather he met and been merely thankful for it, but Lawlor was wearing down from too much of a good thing. This trans-Atlantic racing was everlastingly strenuous. It was a long way. Andrews was right, but it was just as long for Andrews as for him. The *Mermaid* could scarcely have fared better than he had and so he kept on his way, making the *Sea Serpent* steer herself as much as possible, and trying to get what rest he could against emergencies that might lie ahead.

On July 19, a barque came up over the sea-edge, backed her yards, heaving to, to speak the *Sea Serpent*. As usual she wanted to rescue the voyager. She was a German out of Plymouth, England, for Quebec, Canada. Apparently Lawlor was pretty well up to fall in with her, for the weather, while too heavy for a fifteen footer, had not been so bad as to put her much off her course and in July a sailing ship would be traversing a higher latitude than earlier while there was still danger from drifting arctic ice. After an interchange of positions the barque made off.

About that time, quite possibly the next day, for the log he entrusted to her people ended with July 20, Lawlor fell in with the *Queensmore* bound west, a lively steamer whose officers were

much interested in the race. Lawlor had a letter ready, which the officers kindly agreed to forward for him when they got into Boston, and an abstract log which he thought might interest them. He commenced to feel he would win. The *Queensmore* had been on the lookout for the *Mermaid* but had, up until then, seen nothing of her. The chances of the steamer missing her were infinite, but still, no news was hopeful to Lawlor. He pushed on more intent than ever on reaching the other side ahead.

Feeling he might soon be in touch with the enormous British flotilla, which would be making and leaving England on a thousand tracks, Lawlor worked the nights through and as much of the day as he could possibly keep awake. It was a familiar dodge of single-handers since at night their boats are so small as to be practically invisible. As if to disappoint him for all the long hours faithfully served, the wind that had been so roughly kind, fell away to light airs and progress was consequently checked. It was not quite safe to leave the *Sea Serpent* sailing herself while he slept. She toddled along well enough so, but if sleep should prove sound, and conditions change while the crew was below, well, it would have been just too bad for the race across the Atlantic. Yet the light weather lured. A good sailor sleeps whenever he can in his watch below; there is no telling when the next chance may come, and if that is obviously good practice to men on board wind jammers it was all the more evident to a single-hander, for whom there is no other watch, no eight bells, and every task is an all hands maneuver.

On July 24, Lawlor settled himself for a nap. He steered by rudder ropes and these he made fast. The main sheet was secured loosely. He took a look around and then turned in. He awoke to hear a grinding noise, but thinking it might only be a shark

rubbing his back against the hull, as some of them from time to time did, he lay still. The hull took on a curious motion. For a few minutes he thought the wind had changed, but the lapping of the water seemed much as it had when he lay down. So he lay between waking and sleeping, when the boat gave a twist. An earthquake! That was what that should be. He had never felt an earthquake, so he sat up to see if anything visible accompanied it. When he looked forward over the nose of his dory his eyes stood out on pegs.

A shark, lying almost on his back, was slowly striving to take the stem piece. He gnawed away at it feverishly. The grinding noise was louder on deck as the great jaws tore their teeth through the woody fibre. Lawlor had a harpoon on board to use on fish. It was designed rather as an emergency tool, to be used when food should run low. He felt toward it as he might toward his life line, or his rudder; it was one of the vital simplicities without which life might be endangered or even lost. He reached it, settled it in the hollow of his hand to throw at the bluish white of the jaws, then he paused. He could not afford to lose the weapon. The brave thing to do would be to take his sheath knife to the bow and boldly slash at the monster, but a dory's nose is a ticklish place to fight with a shark. There was an excellent chance of his finding himself deposited overside perhaps on the very tip of the snout. He had no time to weigh and consider. The planks were thin and the shark was doing his best.

Both Lawlor and Andrews carried patent yacht signals in the form of an explosive light something like a Roman candle. Lawlor had a moment of divination. In his mind's eye he looked ahead several jumps in the crude game of eating or being eaten.

He reached under the deck for a yacht signal. In a second the fuse was alight. The signal was quickly wrapped in an old newspaper and the whole was flung to the shark. The boat ceased to shake as the shark let go and cruised carefully to have a look at this new article of diet. Lawlor saw the shadow of his body pass beneath the boat. When he had made sure there was no deceit about the newspaper the shark rolled upon his shoulder and took it for his own, just as the fizzing of the fuse ceased and the entire affair exploded within his maw. The happy ending amused Lawlor who described the effect of the taking of the bait as "Much to the detriment of the shark's internal economy." Needless to say the bow of the *Sea Serpent* was relieved from annoyance.

Meanwhile, the patience of the lone hander was no longer tried. Wind came. The *Sea Serpent* climbed out to get to England first. With the heavy ballast, her lightening was not at all perceptible as Lawlor ate up her cargo, but if she grew no faster she proved at least constant and seemed very little fouled. Soon she was up into the lane of English traffic. Like the first forty-eight hours out of Boston, this last bit offered more dangers than a thousand miles in mid-ocean could hold. Still, he was driving then. He had heard nothing from Andrews, but he knew the race might be lost by an hour's carelessness and Andrews had the odds on him in experience. The race was all the more exciting because he knew nothing of the whereabouts of his rival. On to England. It was a long way.

At last he made out the Scilly Island station. The tide gave him some trouble then and the wind varied in quarter from hour to hour, but he had seen land, saw it all the time he lay baffled trying to reach the mainland. What was more pleasant,



he saw nothing of the *Mermaid* coming up behind. From Scilly Island to Land's End is thirty-six miles, and to where the headland falls back into the Cove of Mount's Bay and the Lizard reaches out beyond, it is not over twenty-five. Yet Lawlor was seen off the Scilly Islands on August 4, and it was a three days' run before the last despatch of the race left England. It read thus:

"London, August 7. Captain Lawlor on board American dory *Sea Serpent* which started from Boston on ocean race with *Mermaid* arrived at Coverack near Lizard Point on English Channel at 6:30 A. M. Wednesday."

In spite of wind and calm the *Sea Serpent* had gotten through. It had been a long way, but for Andrews it was not only long but impossible. He had fifteen days more to battle when Lawlor landed at Coverack, only to give up when still six hundred miles from England. There was no argument over who won. Lawlor was made much of locally. He was very tired, but had put on flesh. This was perhaps due to inaction, for his diet had been spare after his last upset. He was welcomed at the house of the postmaster, who was perhaps the nearest to a crown official the village had, and who gave the racer every attention, so much so that Lawlor made the house his headquarters until he was sufficiently rested to undertake the journey back to the states.

So ended the single-handed race of 1891.



 I AM THINKING OF DE-  
PARTURE, AND OF THE GREAT JOY CALLED LIV-  
ING, WHEN I SHALL BE AGAIN ALONE ON THE  
SEA

—*Alain Gerbault*



---

## VI: THE LITTLEST ONE OF ALL: *The Sapolio*

☆☆☆ IT WAS A MERRY, PLEASURE-LOVING CROWD GATHERED ON the long pier at Atlantic City. The red sun tinted the upturned faces as it settled into the west. Every eye was fixed upon a small boat that swung in davits above their heads. Straw hats and dark, close-fitting clothes set off the men waiting upon the outskirts of the crowd. There was a scattering of checked suits and flashy waistcoats. The women were close to the water's edge. White hands fluttered from half-mitts of black lace. Parasols waved. Gallant bodies teetered upon small feet shod in high, laced boots. Generous dresses, flounced and ruffled, gave a sweep to bustled contours. Long sleeves swept to wrists close-fastened in bands of ribbon. All the dainty wonder of youth and beauty waited upon the boat hanging in its davits above the swirling tide.

"Is that the boat, Frederick?"

"Yes."

"Oh, such a little boat! I should be afraid. Sadie, Frederick says that's the boat."

"White wings, they never grow weary," hummed Sadie.

"There's the captain. Isn't he wonderful? So stern and brave."

"He won't really sail to Spain in that boat?"

Frederick smiled and smoothed his moustache.



"Look at him lift that in. He's strong," said Frederick.

"I think he's nice."

"Oh, I'm so tired. Will he never sail? I feel quite faint, Frederick."

"Do you really, Amelia? Perhaps we'd better ——"

"Yes, no. I don't know, Frederick. Look at the captain now. They're going to lower the boat. She's really going. Isn't it thrilling?"

"The man's a fool," muttered Frederick.

"How can you say that? He's wonderful. Oh, if I could only go out there with a man like that. There, she's started, she's going. Oh, I can't see. There are too many people."

"My bonnie lies over the ocean," hummed Sadie.

"Oh, it's splendid, splendid. He's off, he's really off."

The little boat kissed the tide with a resounding splash. The falls were let go. A rowboat put a line on board her and began to tow her out the inlet toward the bar. Her supplies were piled hit or miss in the cockpit. The mast was still unwedged and rattled to the roll of the inlet swells, but she was really bound out with Captain William A. Andrews sitting hunched up on top of his supplies. The *Sapolio* was sailing for Spain.

Captain Andrews was a figure in trans-Atlantic ventures. The press was free spoken and florid in the gay nineties. Reporters wrote with a flourish. Here is what one thought. "The example of intelligent daring is never lost on the world. The glorious deeds of the Greeks and the Romans are taught to our school boys as incentives to manly living, and who shall say that the cruise of the little *Sapolio* shall not live long in the annals of men to encourage the race to believe that man is superior to the elements, and may master the waves and the storms. Man's

mastery over the material world is evident on every side, while too often he is himself a slave to lesser things. Master of the Universe, is he master of himself? Here this man steps in to show us that man is indomitable, and may rule both the elements and himself."

Nearly every man who has crossed the ocean in a small boat has made a boast that the feat has never been done in a craft so small as his. Either he has never heard of the voyages of others, or he has been so intent upon his own undertaking as never to think of any but his own attempt. Captain Andrews not only claimed his boat was the smallest but also the fastest small boat to cross the Atlantic. In the first he was right. The second is more difficult to prove. No two single-handers ever get just the same weather conditions, nor suffer just the same accidents. For a little ship of her inches Andrews' boat was fast, but much of her speed rested with her driving master.

The *Sapolio* was fourteen feet six inches long with a beam of five feet five inches and three feet depth. The keel was ten feet long leaving short ends. She was built as a folding boat of thin cedar boards covered with canvas. There were three hinges to her folding; one on the keel and one on each side of the turn of the bilge. Without her deck she folded up like a paper hat, turning into a canvas covered bundle of half inch cedar. For the trans-Atlantic voyage she was decked over and stiffened by an athwartship bulkhead forward, making a closed locker of her bow, by an after bulkhead and by stanchions down both the port and starboard sides of her little cockpit, giving more locker space. She was too small to have more than one well. This was left two feet wide and six feet long. In this space the navigator would be compelled to eat and sleep. A double hatch closed on a slide

over this well so that it could be left half open or entirely closed. Neither the forward or after bulkheads were water tight nor any of the lockers. Supplies were carried in tin cans, even the pilot biscuit in five pound containers provided with a hand hole that could be sealed. Water was carried in bottles.

The remarkable thing about the boat was her hull form. She was flat in the bottom, a veritable scow. Andrews called her a sneak-box although the land-loving journalists dubbed her a dory. They had gotten the habit by 1892. A hull of this shape had a tendency to push the water before her when loaded, and to take to diving through seas in broken water. She was narrowed in the stern giving the under-water form of a double-ender. Three hundred fifty pounds of lead were fastened to the keel to keep her on her feet. She was single-masted, a stout four inch stick eight feet high. Her mainsail was spread upon a gaff and boom, her jib set upon a stubby bowsprit and she carried a spinnaker and a sprit topsail. Her boom was thirteen feet long and her gaff ten feet. By way of spare canvas the captain had an extra mainsail. There is a relation of water-line length of a boat to her speed. The most that could be expected of a boat so short as the *Sapolio* was from four to five knots. Heavily laden, with her small rig of fifteen yards and the sea changes to be looked for as a matter of course, she might not do better than three, but Andrews' pride rested upon another point. The *Sapolio* was the smallest vessel to brave the Atlantic.

Andrews had been over the track before. In 1878 he and his brother had sailed the *Nautilus* from Boston and in forty-five days landed in Mullion Cove, Cornwall. The *Nautilus* had been a nineteen foot dory with an eight foot mast spreading a lateen sail of twenty-five yards. Alone, he had put in sixty-two days at

sea in the *Dark Secret*, a fifteen footer, only to fail, and he had engaged in his race with Lawlor only the year before over the same long course. By the time of the adventure of the *Sapolio* he was a well-seasoned man of forty-nine, a skilled artisan and a seaman by choice. If he had no long sea pedigree with the government examiners he made up for it by being the most experienced single-hander of his day, a shrewd, clever man, strongly built.

There was a singular strain of mingled humor and bitterness in Andrews. When he was building the *Sapolio* in Atlantic City, and doing very nice work on it too, a lady remarked, "Why, she looks like a coffin; and you are building her yourself?"

"Yes, madam, and should she go down, I shall be my own undertaker."

At the very start of his journey Andrews bid fair to appear ridiculous. With gusto he talks in his log of the boat kissing its element and tells how he was towed out to sea with an ebb-tide under him and a roaring July thunder squall swinging across the marshes behind, only to drift all night becalmed just beyond the bar. The boat leaked, his compass came to pieces, he was sore all over from the threshing about in the tossing sneak-box, he got no supper because he could find nothing in the promiscuously stowed mass, he tore his pants and destroyed his underwear, but in the morning he grinned at Absecon Lighthouse, rubbed his bruises and taking a moment to think it all over decided the sea had been kinder to him than Atlantic City would have been if he had sculled back to port in the dark.

Once on his way he found the boat pounded. "Proved quite a wave-smasher," he said but added, "I think she will show some good qualities after a while."

The surprising thing about the matter is that the *Sapolio* was able to live at all. In a copy of *Engineering* for September, 1892, there was an article commenting on Lloyd's annual report in which sixty-eight vessels were noted as having sailed without ever being heard from. Sixty-eight big vessels foundered, became derelict, or burned without one word of their fate reaching Lloyds. More than a thousand were lost in the year, a total of six hundred forty-nine thousand, nine hundred forty-six tons, and sixty-eight of them went without a trace! Yet the *Sapolio* lived and made her voyage. Her passage seems a miracle in view of the good ships that, fully manned, ably officered, surrendered to the attacks of the sea. There is no doubt of the heroism of Andrews, nor any reflection upon his ability, but he was alone in a craft of which he himself said, "She sailed to windward, but like an old tub." The voyage was hazardous.

On July 22, he threw over his first bottle. He had no better way of sending word of his progress. A bottle containing a message is an old device. Columbus launched a parchment describing his discoveries in 1493. It was lost forever. Clement Wragge, the meteorologist, threw overboard more than a hundred bottles on a voyage from Australia to England in 1878. Only six were ever heard from. One travelled five thousand miles in two years and was picked up in Mobile Bay. The English ship *Blonde* sent one adrift in 1826 which landed in France sixteen years later. In 1849 a whaleship found a sealed bottle at sea. It contained documents from Sir John Franklin, dated June, 1845, which was a few weeks after the unfortunate explorer plunged into the ice in his drive toward the North Pole. The use of bottles was not new, but Andrews tried it rather often.

He had a printed form that ran thus:





INTERNATIONAL NEWSREEL

Alain Gerbault in the *Firecrest* after having traversed 5,600  
miles of water in 142 days





INTERNATIONAL NEWSREEL

The *Firecrest* was a sea-wracked thing. Her teak rail was grey and her white paint scarred and brown

THIS BOTTLE was thrown out on the Atlantic Ocean about  
 .....  
 from the boat "Sapolio" (14 feet, 6 inches in length) making a trip from Atlantic City, New Jersey, to Palos, Spain. The "Sapolio" is sailed by Captain William A. Andrews who formerly crossed the Atlantic Ocean in the "Mermaid" and the "Nautilus" and was 62 days on the ocean in the "Dark Secret."

The present trip is to the point where Columbus started, to show that men of more modern days can discount in many lines the great achievements of the past. The finder of this bottle is requested to fill the blank below and return it by mail in the attached envelope.

Found by .....  
 At .....  
 Date .....

The first bottle was launched Friday, July 22, 1892, and was picked up by Captain E. C. Collins at Ship Shoal Inlet, Northampton County, Virginia, on November 29, 1892, so it took one hundred thirteen days to reach shore from a point fifty miles east-southeast of Atlantic City. On the back of the form Andrews had written, "Boat leaking badly. Have sailed the past two nights. Feel a little chumpy." He was already reaping the effects of his loss of rest. He sailed four nights before he stowed his supplies and opened a space in the cockpit where he could lie at full length.

By the end of those four days his wrists were badly swollen from sunburn, he felt lame and tired and was covered with black

and blue spots where the boat had thrashed him, but he was too glad to be really under way to care.

The *Sapolio* had been tried out in those four days. Through thickening weather and the threat of lightning, Andrews drove her to see what she could do. He found she was very nicely balanced and able to steer herself. He decided she was the best he had had, but added a "so far" to his opinion to leave the future some reason for being. She was dry except when driven. Andrews sailed her for all she had in her. He crouched down under her hatch, his head and shoulders protected by oilskins. A life line was made fast to him, in case he should be suddenly spilled into the hills of water that had already turned a dark blue. The weather was hot and at times the wind failed utterly, or was so light as to serve very little. That was her only fault, she was no ghoster, able to make distance in light airs. For the rest Andrews had nothing but praise.

His life on board was haphazard enough. When he got the boat going right, spinnaker set and all drawing, he would begin rummaging in his lockers throwing over every pound of useless stuff to save the boat weight and to make the voyage faster. A sponge bath, followed by a late breakfast, slowed his routine so much that he forgot to get his noon sight for latitude until it was too late and that afternoon he sailed gaily before flying scud and at night heard a finback whale blowing close at hand. Next morning, he raised the floor of his boat an inch to make it drier, put on his oilskins again and sailed a twenty-four hour run for one hundred miles; very good indeed for a fourteen foot six inch sneak-box.

Andrews seems to have had more fun than most single-handers. He was easy going but not careless about important things. When

he saw a dozen Mother Cary's chickens resting on the water he knew they were acting naturally. There was a blow on hand he felt sure, so to get ready for it he filled his pipe, crouched down into the cockpit and took a sleep while he could get it. No, he was not careless, he used every bit of wit he had, but he did not take his task as seriously as many men did, that was all. A little water in the boat did not make him feel he was in desperate straits. With rare good humor, if a sea flew across him, waking him from a snooze, he shook himself and hummed, "Bail, ye Tarriers, bail," as he put the water "back where it belonged." He welcomed the warmth and the life of the Gulf Stream, but mildly objected to so beneficent a thing "slopping over" so often. When he saw the new moon over his left shoulder for luck, he was very happy. Fundamentally his attitude was ideal for his work.

Gradually he came to trust the *Sapolio*. Admiration of her grew steadily. He drove her through darkness, mist and lightning. He drove her until she carried away the goose-neck on the boom, but he took even so vital an accident as part of his work and had time to note passing a giant cephalopod the same evening. When he rested, with his blanket spread on top of the spinnaker, and the *Sapolio* wallowing along, now fairly on her keel, now on her beams end, and the water sloshed up on to the floor under him, he eased her of sail, bailed out and in quiet good humor wrote in his log, "And still you will inquire where I got my exercise?" When the wind lightened he repaired his goose-neck, had a bath, inspected the canvas and paint and spied a whole school of little fish, waiting, he was sure, for the dolphins to carry them off. He pitied the flying fish always fleeing from the eternal threat of the deep, and in his slow, humorous way he decided if he could sail fast enough he would keep the barnacles

from catching on his hull. He kept his boots dry by going bare-foot. He spoke the *Burrill*, a blue-nose ship, and got "a five gallon jug of bad water from her and a dozen or less bottles of the same, for which I was very thankful." If he drove hard through the night and felt the water which he shipped rising above his ankles, he reflected that at any rate he had kept her at it until "the wind blew through my whiskers."

Meanwhile the boat was working well to the eastward and the voyager was putting overboard a bottle or so daily. One proved so heavy after his despatch was in that it sank. Too much report and too little air, Andrews decided, so he left it with the thought that he had given a brown study to some future geologist.

August 1 was too sloppy for a small boat. Andrews took a wicked beating all day until spray-lashed and wearied by holding the boat up to the wicked flaws, he regretfully took in his sail and put over his drogue for the first time. The boat pounded badly, but there was no keeping way on her in the teeth of the east wind and the great lump of sea swinging down from ahead. The lantern capsized and went out. The rigging sang. The seas swept the boat at every buffet. Toward morning the drogue-line parted and the drogue was never seen again. Andrews did the impossible. He got under way and fairly buried her all day. "Am glad in one way that I lost my drogue. I had no place for it, it was always in the way and it hauled her down by the stern, causing water to break over the boat." After beating all day to windward he got out his five pound anchor and let it go over the side with a long shot of cable which held her head to the wind and sea. Then he closed his slide and gave up the deck for the night.



For four days Andrews saw nothing but water. A double rainbow one morning promised more trouble. Not a sail nor any smoke appeared above the sea rim. The nights were a bad dream. Toughened and used to exposure as the voyager had become, he admitted that he was very tired before the weather broke. Looking for a favorable slant he told himself it would be better each morning, or at any rate by the next. Living in rubber boots, not knowing what any hour or even minute might bring, the courage of the man is superhuman to contemplate. At last the wind drew far enough south to permit the boat being put upon an east course. The sea was still bad but the voyage was on again. "It's rough, but we must have it, and yet what old salt would be without it," Andrews wrote in his log. The remark was typical of the man.

A day or two of beautiful weather followed. It gave a chance to dry out, open the boat and get rid of the inevitable must that came from the wet. He never felt quite safe with the hatches open, but he risked a sea's coming aboard to get the boat cleaned and freshened. He felt the days were weather breeders, but he used them to the full.

At least one blessing had come with time. The *Sapolio* had stopped leaking. Perhaps the cedar planks had swollen shut, or the pores of the canvas covering had filled. Andrews thought it was the latter. He saw a thick, slimy mould or fungus forming on the hull, which he hoped would have no bad effect on the canvas. Not being a man to worry he took the benefit of the thing; there was no more regular bailing. All the voyage through he gave the covering of the hull reasonable care. He steered clear of even small sticks to avoid tearing it and was especially careful when alongside ships. One voyage across the Atlantic



was the life of a canvas covered boat in his opinion. He was going to make it serve that successfully.

Andrews had little unreasonable fear. He enjoyed seeing the gulls, he noted every appearance of floating stuff: a curled shaving, a barnacle-covered log, gulf weed, physolia. These last he admired and never wearied of logging them. There is scarcely a more charming thing to meet at sea than the Portuguese-man-of-war. He saw some only an inch long, tiny things infinitely fragile to undertake a life of sea roving. He thought the plaintive cry of the petrels sorrowful, as they flitted from trough to trough across the vast waste. One night he heard a faint sound as if of a tide rip or surf on a beach, only it came nearer and upon the complete silence seemed to grow to a roar. It was a drove of the wild pigs of the sea, porpoise, travelling in a great herd. Two great bulls headed the pack, and behind them the water whitened in the night. They did not know what to make of the boat, but at last they passed on. The captain was not much disturbed by them. A porpoise has never been known to attack a man, nor to display any determined enmity toward him, although they all turn savagely enough upon any of their own flock who become wounded. Most lone voyagers behave with all respect to the sea life with which they live so long at a time. For several days Andrews watched every bit of weed drifting past to catch a gulf weed crab as a curiosity. One morning he saw one two inches long swimming after the *Sapolio*. He made for it but when he saw the creature try so desperately to get up with him, obviously for protection, he appreciated its struggle and left it alive to work out its own destiny.

Only once did the *Sapolio* come up with sea life which put her skipper into a fright. About five-thirty of a clear, bright after-

noon, a herd of finback whales came straight down on the boat, feeding. The wind was so light the boat was helpless. Andrews lost no time getting into action. He had to take chances with their flukes; a touch would have done for him. He yelled, rattled his paddle, but in spite of the noise they came right on, mouths wide open and the blow holes large enough to crawl into. The bravery of the captain was gone. He felt suddenly ashake in the knees. They made the water boil. They were under the boat and all about, coming to the surface to blow in great lazy gusts. The unfortunate adventurer beat his paddle in the water and clung to his life-line. Any one of them might rise under the boat and tear her to pieces in his surprise. Five hundred horse power lay in the stroke of the tail flukes. It was as if Andrews were holding court for the most powerful mammals alive, and the world were emptying all the whales into the sea about his boat. For such giants they were possessed of grace of a sort in their passage through the water, the grace of enormous fins at work. Andrews felt the mist of their breathing falling upon him as he watched his compass whirligig and the hulking bodies wheel past. At last, one drew away, then another until he was left alone with only the memory of the big, white mouths, and the little pig eyes, bull mad or only curious. That was an evening of nightmare surely.

One other phase of sea life that Andrews met struck him with both awe and wonder rather than fear. He was running down to speak a Portuguese brigantine. The tiller in one hand and a cracker in the other, for he was eating dinner at the time, he drew close to the vessel. Suddenly he saw what looked to be reddish rust or blood on the water. He altered his course slightly to pass close. To his horror he found that he was almost upon

a head like that of a sea cow. The head was six or seven inches across and from it the body ran down obliquely into the clear depths for thirty feet or more and was two feet thick. It appeared to have life and was of a speckled red and azure color, similar to a robin's or canary's egg shell. When the first shock passed he thought he had come upon an enormous jelly fish, although the body was colored much like that of a cephalopod. No, he was not truly afraid of the thing, but he did not lie down during the night, and he carried away his spinnaker boom as he drove the *Sapolio* under full press of sail.

He was getting well over in spite of bad weather. On August 19 he managed to take a poor observation, which he worked up to give him latitude 39.47 N., longitude D. R. 30 W., or within a day's sail of Flores, the most westerly of the Azores. His chart gave no details of the Azores, and his position he knew to be doubtful. He had what he called a brown study, after which he decided to carry on until midnight. A squall came down upon him. It blew and it rained and the *Sapolio* drove before it. At midnight Captain Andrews let go his anchor, which found no bottom, but served to make the drift slow. The seas were mountainous. The captain secured his sail so it could be hoisted quickly if he found himself facing a desperate chance. Then he sat and thought it all over, trying to reckon his drift and leeway. At the end he decided he knew nothing about it, so he sank into a corner to wait and flung the spray from his eyes. He would have to take his chances.

In the morning there was no sight of Flores. The rain fell and the wind blew. The clouds were thick and lay in heavy banks drifting with the *Sapolio*. At last Captain Andrews saw a cloud that seemed to rise from the water at a sharp angle. It was but a

shadow like the other clouds but he looked again and again until he was sure it was land. He hauled up for it and soon found a rock so big that it seemed as if the sea had been unable to cover it; not a bad description of any of the Azores.

Slowly he worked in, sighted ridges of different color from the rock, saw the ridges turn into houses and the walls show doors and windows. Some of the villages were near the beach. Cultivated patches of land walled round with pumice stone and lava could be made out. Yet even so close, no harbor, or protected beach was visible among the ragged cliffs and ledges which formed the shore. Captain Andrews took most of the day to search for a way in, but there was none. He waved at the people ashore and they returned his salute. Just as he had decided to give up the search and was standing out in the dusk to get well clear of the island a boat with four men hailed him. They were probably coast guards but Andrews could make them understand nothing. He told them where he came from and that he was bound to Palos. Finding that did not work he told them Lisbon, only he called it Leesbonne. One of their number, a petty officer probably, wrote it down in a book, and made the gesture of drinking by putting his thumb to his mouth and bending back his head as if emptying a bottle. When this produced no understanding they insisted on trying to board the *Sapolio*. Andrews was afraid of damage to his canvas covered hull and was suspicious. He headed out to sea without more words. They yelled and set a dirty sail on a short mast, after clearing a messy lot of gear that cluttered up their boat. For a time he was afraid the wind would fail, giving them a chance to use their oars, but it freshened off shore. He saw signals flash along the headlands behind him and a vessel get under way from behind a little cape, all of which

he connected with his flight. Here was a pretty kettle of fish; he had come bearing good will only to be chased by every available coast guard along the cliffs. Wet and tired, he turned to a cold meal of smoked herring and some crackers, washed down with a drink of bottled water by way of a supper. By midnight he had lost Flores. Then, wet as he was, he dropped upon the deck to sleep off his disappointment.

In the morning he entered in the log that the *Sapolio* had crossed the Atlantic to the island of Flores in less than thirty-one days—a month from the time she was christened by her keel touching the water of Absecon Inlet. It took Thomas Fleming Day, in the twenty-five foot *Seabird*, seventeen days, and he was triple-handed on the voyage. Slocum reached Pico in eighteen days in a boat that could have carried half a dozen as large as the *Sapolio*. Blackburn took twenty-five days to reach the Azores in the *Great Republic*. All good men these, all proud records and the little *Sapolio* sailing it in thirty-one days belongs with them. Captain Andrews had driven the smallest boat to ever cross the ocean until her record was by no means a jest, despite her inches.

The islands were a fairy land to Andrews. Flores had been a dream of beauty. Cloud-capped, its heights hid in purple mist, the island cliffs lifted straight from the sea. Rocks, gashed and threatening, precipices terraced one above the other and villages swung like swallows' nests upon the shelved rock above one's head, that was the Azores. Three thousand feet of bulging rock defying the beat of the sea. Andrews felt the charm of the place but ahead he could see hovering clouds that he thought shrouded other islands, and he had not forgotten his set to with the coast guards. He must find a harbor where he could be understood and where his feat could be appreciated.



He spruced up a little so as not to look like a heathen to the natives. He put on a necktie. He got out six dollars in silver coin that he had put away as being too heavy to carry in his pockets. The little brass lock that secured the hatch of what he called his cabin was oiled and the boat was swept up. Everything was folded and all his halliards neatly coiled. He was ready to go ashore as soon as he could make a landing. Pico rose in the morning. The snow-clad cone against the clear sky broke through the cloud wreath and took a thousand shapes above the mountain. Heading down between San Jorge and Pico he saw smokes rise and fall. Were they signalling about the stranger? Andrews had seen smoke signals in the Civil War. Were the smokes the work of ladrones? He had heard much of the low order pirates and he was sailing alone and unarmed. The wind fell off and he paddled from catspaw to catspaw, making his way toward Terceira. In a smooth sea he found the waters alive. A shark rose to take a look at him. Fish broke about him, singly and in schools. Six inch eels, small crabs, beautiful strange jelly fish, a school of porpoises. The Azores were charming in their variety.

At last he skirted the shore of Terceira. He came up with some fishermen. Running close he told them who he was, that he had come from America, that he was looking for a port. They grew quite excited, gesticulated, shouted and waved him off, so he gave it up and kept on along the shores. Soon he saw a signal station on a headland, then a sea wall, and a massive fortification unfolded to him. He stood in to be greeted by the bark of a dog on a moored lateener. The *Sapolio* nudged her way in beside the schooner and Andrews looked up to speak her people. Holding on to the stranger he called for a Custom House officer. At that moment his welcome began. Deputy consuls came down to see.

Island folk thronged upon the dock. Within fifteen minutes of his arrival sky rockets were screaming and bursting overhead. A harbor master was detailed to look after the *Sapolio* and Captain Andrews went ashore to be welcomed officially to Angra, the capital of the Azores. He was dined and wined. Carriages were offered and he was carried in triumph to see the cathedral, the public squares, the gardens, the bull ring and the theatres. By night the whole island knew an intrepid Yankee had come single-handed. A brass band gathered a multitude of people. Torch-lights flared. Roses were strewn before the procession. Rockets lighted the scene. Speeches were made. Captain Andrews uncovered and bowed and bowed. His modesty was surprised at his welcome, but his gratitude was sincere. His quarters for the night were palatial. He could scarcely think he was the same man who had spent night after night alone in the midst of great waters. It was unreal, like a pleasant dream. He settled into the bed with a sense of wonder and amazement. His mind could not grasp the surprising contrast of the long past with his fantastic present.

Six water jars, a new spinnaker boom, a straw hat, papers, photos, wine, a book of the Azores, were all showered graciously upon the *Sapolio* while her skipper was carried off to a bull fight where a matador presented him with a bouquet, a gift of honor.

The *Sapolio* sailed at two in the afternoon of August 29. Captain Andrews had completed two thousand miles, but he was anxious to get on with the voyage. He sailed in a flare of glory. Every canoe, boat and barge went out of the harbor with him. The band played national airs on the consular agent's barge. Captain Andrews bid them good-bye, tacked back to the crowded wharf and was greeted by a roar. English steamer whis-

tles bellowed, cheers went up and he passed through the waiting fleet to the open sea.

The resumption of the voyage was a terrible change to the much-fêted seaman. The morning of the thirtieth opened with puffy northeast wind, but a lump of sea running. The captain felt the good time ashore had broken his stride. He was a little dubious about the growing swell under him and instead of welcoming the light airs as a time to sleep he remained anxiously awake, worried because he was not further on his way. He kept remembering an encounter with an Italian barque he had had six hundred miles back, an encounter at night when the skipper of the barque, seeing the *Sapolio's* light tossing like a will-o'-the-wisp, came charging up and putting his night glasses on the little boat read her name at a distance of twenty feet and shouted "Ha, ha, *Sapolio*," then braced his yards round until the sails were aback and the two skippers had a half hour gam in the dark. It was a ghostly seance. Andrews told his story and at each pause,

"But it is dangerous, do you want someone with you?"

And when Andrews had explained again,

"But it is dangerous. You stand a watch all night long?"

So at last Andrews shoved off still hearing the plaintive wonder of the Italian master contemplating the inexplicable lunacy of a man content to remain a lone voice speaking quietly in the night of an unbelievable voyage. Andrews had not thought of it much then, or since, until that day and night after he left the Azores and lay tormented by light winds and a thrashing swell that tumbled him about mercilessly.

"But it is dangerous," he seemed to hear.

He broke out his quadrant and found it quite mouldy from the dampness of twelve days' disuse. Then before he could get it

cleaned up a sea fell upon him out of the dark and he had no need of a star sight of Polaris, for finding himself in a squall he surrendered at once. "As with Hannibal's army resting before Rome," he wrote next day in his log. "I am afraid that luxuriating at Angra has spoiled me, for at the sight of a storm coming at nine P. M., I hauled down the sail and drifted until daylight." It was as if the applause of thousands of people had robbed him of his power to carry on, had bent his judgment and thrown all his experience into the discard.

The sea was lifeless; not a ship, not a Portuguese-man-of-war. A swashing swell ran out of the northward and the wind drew east. The *Sapolio* made a northeast course, but the wind was light. Everything went wrong. Captain Andrews broke his lantern and spent hours trying to make a globe out of two bottles, which, one after another, failed him. Too much hilarity at Terceira—he could have gotten globes there if he had not been too busy enjoying himself. The wind picked up and settled to a storm. Ten days from Terceira found the wind still east. The boat pounded away and Andrews could do little but lie below his hatches and listen to the eternal *ca chunk, ca slump*, of the nose of his little sloop sloshing into the head sea. The seas roared all about, great breaking crests that boarded her time after time. The captain was disgusted. Would the wind never come about and give him a chance? He commenced to think of having to run back to the Azores, or down to Madeira to refit. The boat staggered under the hammering like a drunken thing. Once, after a crash, he heard a strange rasping sound. Pipe in mouth he pushed back the slide and rushed to his tiller. Catching it he found it loose but it was not the rudder that had given away, only the toothed quadrant fastened on the deck to lock the tiller steady

when the boat stood its own watch. He lashed it tight and got control again in the roar and crash of swinging seas. Then he found he had broken one of his teeth in the excitement. It ached wickedly.

Retiring below, he continued to take baths as the sea sought out every crevice and worked below. The weather was brazen, white and windy. He had drifted to the southwest for thirty-six hours. Something had to be done. Coming up from the comparative shelter of the shallow cabin he took charge, made what sail he dared and put her at it. His tooth had developed a throbbing, maddening pain. He contrived to pull it. When the wind lightened a little he took a bath and cleaned up. Andrews knew how quickly a man became a sodden wreck. He was his fighting self again. Out of his efforts he had recovered a pride in being able to live under such conditions. The drawing of his tooth was tonic to him. If he had nerve enough to pull his own tooth he must be more desperate than dead. He would be as desperate as the occasion needed. If he could live so long in a boat less than fifteen feet, he would get over in time. If anyone beat his record he would do it again. It was really not so bad as it seemed. He saw a live butterfly. There was bravery as foolhardy as his own. Out of all these reflections he forged a courage to go through with his voyage. He got all the sleep he could, heaving to at nights, for if the wind let up and drew round to a favorable quarter he intended to drive for Palos like a mad man.

Meanwhile he took his beating manfully. On September 8 seas pounded the boat, throwing her upon her beams end, till her skipper rattled around in her like dice in a box. The crests swept down upon her driving her under. Once Andrews opened the hatch when he thought she had really capsized. He could see



nothing but light azure for several seconds and the water gushed in upon him as if sent below out of a pressure hose. She must have been buried under a mighty wave. She came up at last, half swamped, but he got the water out of her quickly and looked about to see nothing but a seething mass of tumbling water, ducked below again to the stuffiness of his cabin. Every lightening of the wind he used by putting sail on her, and when it breezed up again too heavily he heaved to and let the sea take her.

The *Sapolio* did not sail with her old light-footedness. While lying at Terceira her bottom had fouled with barnacles. Instead of four knots she did two. Andrews scraped her as far down the sides as he could reach. She was becoming a strange sea thing before his eyes, no longer the sleek hull of smooth canvas that had left Atlantic City to the awe of the onlookers. He decided to head for Lisbon. He got a good latitude sight and found he was on the parallel of that old city. There he would get the barnacles off her, buy a new lantern and some new gear, for his running rigging was chafing in spots.

At last he got a fair, free wind and a clear day. He dried everything. He looked over the boat with the gimlet eye of an admiral. She was very foul and much battered. He took a sight that gave him latitude as 38.52 N. twelve miles north of Lisbon. His dead reckoning longitude was 12.30 W. or about three degrees west of Lisbon. He thought he had a position of advantage. He would make for Lisbon. Sun and a west-northwest wind mixed with rain squalls were the order of the day. At night the stars were clear and the swells so big and long as to cut those near the horizon from view for minutes. It was a pause in his wanderings. The boat pounded badly, headed as she was, but he got back his confidence. It promised to be up hill

work to go to Lisbon. The wind was fair for Cape St. Vincent. He squared away, rolling and splashing for Palos. To encourage him he spied a steamer with yellow funnel. It was medicine to him, like dry clothes for the wet stuff he had worn into holes. He had emerged victorious from the sea's fury. He would get to Palos yet. Soon he saw a full-rigged ship and then the German ship *Kosmos* bound out from Hamburg to Montevideo.

Her captain spoke the little voyager.

"How far vas you going it dat ting?"

"New York to Lisbon."

"From Leesbonne to New York? Vell I guess you don't get there, don't it?"

"From New York to Lisbon."

"Oh ho! From New York to Leesbonne, oh vell, dot is deeferent den, ain't it? How many you got on pord mit you?"

When Captain Andrews told him he was alone he threw up both hands, then snatching off his hat waved at the voyager as long as he could be seen.

The *Sapolio* was up with the great parade of ships that is always swinging around Cape Vincent. They heartened him, whether he spoke them or not. The mere mast of a steamship sticking out of the water seemed friendly. When he was close enough to make out their hulls they amused him. One would be rolling enough to make him glad he was on the *Sapolio*. Another would be slodging head to the seas, making hard going. There was a certain element of danger in their nearness. One captain asked Andrews if he were not afraid.

"I will be to-night," laughed Andrews and he meant it, for in addition to the tough, dark work of driving through a frowning

sea, he would have the menace of close shaves with shipping, without a reliable lantern to warn them of his whereabouts.

Yet he sailed every hour he dared. It was the sixteenth of September by then and he was getting close to the equinox. Every sailor used to look for storms about then, and Andrews imagined he was very close to a gale. The weather was heavy, the swells long and high. Trying to get a noon sight resulted in the dousing of skipper and quadrant. Andrews was not anxious to close with the land too suddenly. He thought a strange coast no place to be hurried by a westerly gale, a real knock-down and drag-out affair such as the snorters that hit the Spanish coast sometimes turn out to be. The *Sapolio* could not log better than two knots because she was so foul. Clearly a beat to the windward would be impossible. When he could get a leading wind for Cape Vincent, Andrews decided to drive the boat for all she had, but meanwhile he kept clear of the shore. He knew where he wanted to go.

The nineteenth brought him his chance, a fine, clear day, wind lighter than needed, but fair. Andrews turned out before dawn and worked up a good "ash breeze" with his paddle to help out the sails. There was not much fun to such work for the *Sapolio* was so heavy with weeds and barnacles it was like shoveling mud out of a deep hole to move her over the heaving seas. There was no spirit to it and nothing that a voyager had to do was so deadening nor assured him solidly of his utter solitude. Captain Andrews was looking for land by the time the wind had grown so he could really sail and lay aside his paddle. The night before he thought he had seen shore through the dull mist far to the southeast, but under the noon sun there was nothing but a flattened horizon that could be spied when one stood in the boat.

Presently he saw four gulls flying as he was headed, then a lone bird like a Java sparrow which settled in his rigging, an omen of good luck, then seven more in flight, and last a fly. This pleased Andrews more than the birds for he felt he was surely drawing close to shore. "All life is desirous of some company," he said, and thought the fly the prince of good fellows for signing on the *Sapolio*. Steamers grew more numerous, so many of them that Andrews paid them little or no attention. They in turn thought little of seeing a small boat in their path, for they knew land lay close at hand. Meanwhile the *Sapolio* was pounding away at the rate of two knots, but two knots in the right direction. Then at last—land! Land stretching along south by east of the boat. Captain Andrews looked away at a flock of gulls feeding, and then back at the lifting headlands. In sixty-one days from the time the *Sapolio* was launched she was in sight of Portugal.

That night was overcast and dark. There were a few masthead lights of steamers, but many more sailing vessels travelling under red and green glims. Andrews passed two lighthouses before he picked up one that flashed a brilliant beam every two minutes. He noticed as he held his course that the vessels with whom he had been travelling had veered to port and look ahead as he might he could see no new light. It dawned on him that he was up with the Cape, the light he had watched for so long was the St. Vincent light and he was then headed into the outer darkness of the open sea. About the same time he found the water luminous and burning all about him. One streak of light seemed to head straight in for the lighthouse. Another showed a long line of breakers, roaring in a clean white break, and above them the jet of night-ridden cliffs. A ghastly beauty held the captain

for a moment, then he put her about on the run, but she was cumbered with her spinnaker and was caught aback. He got out his paddle to help her round and the blade snapped short at his first dig. He was lost. It was incredible but he was sure of it. He got out of irons and felt the foolish jumping yield to a forward slide. Her sails were drawing again but he was not free yet. Breakers were whitening in the ghostly fashion they have of a night. He imagined he could trace lines of surf tumbling upon just-covered reefs. Every moment he expected to feel the *Sapolio* fetch and hear the rending of her light planks, but he won clear. He had been caught in the race off St. Vincent. Most headlands have such a quickening of the tide which sets up a rip-rap of sea, eager enough to engulf so small a craft. The danger was real, all but the cliffs. They were low lying clouds, and the real St. Vincent was almost ten miles to eastward. The captain was thankful for his escape, but thoroughly angry with himself. He determined never again to cruise without an accurate chart and coast guides. That fright in the dark was really too ugly.

Cape St. Vincent is a magnificent rock rising from behind the lighthouse. In the fashion of the coast, the lighthouse is fortified and painted a glaring white. Off the end a rock stands like a monolith rising a sheer hundred feet from the sea. On the eastern cape face is a rock as squarely cubed as if cut by a mason and an arch-like mouth of a cavern leads within it. The rock flashes color and along the foot the sea carves caves and grotto crypts for its own worship, filled with the thousand echoes of its own voice and the thunder of its mood. The current is eastward in drift along the bold foot of the crags. Andrews was borne along past all that toward Palos. The Spanish sun shone upon him and in the afternoon, when the wind turned off shore, he decided to



beat into the little harbor of Burgau. The wind had stiffened and he had hard work of it but he got in close enough to hear the dogs barking. There were ten boats moored, but the tenders were ashore, and although the village people gathered and talked over the newcomer no boat was launched. Andrews let go his five pound anchor. The wind whistled down over the cliffs, but the place was sheltered from any but southward gales and the breeze only seemed to flatten the water where the *Sapolio* lay.

The captain was dubious of his anchor holding him so he prepared to back it. For that he required a heavy weight. He had few of these left. Finally he took a tin box of nails, screws, wire, new locks and other metal gear, wrapped it carefully in canvas and secured it to his anchor cable. The wind freshened and he woke to be thankful he had prepared himself. He had only to get in his dragging anchor, scull ahead to where the native boats lay and let go first his anchor and afterward his tin box. Then he slept securely till morning.

The next day he was off for the ninety mile run down the coast to Palos. He sailed all day and all night drinking in the marvel of azure mountains far inland and anxiously trying to keep from beaching his brave little boat after she had done so nobly. In the morning, finding he had not over-run his reckoning, but was close to Cape St. Marie, he sailed all that day and on into the evening until nine-thirty when he could carry on no longer. He had had forty hours at his tiller. Wrapped in his blanket he stretched upon the floor and slept until daylight. By morning he had drifted off shore until only the mountains could be seen. Fortunately the little wind there was turned favorably, for the *Sapolio* was nearly helpless on the wind because of the beard and barnacles she wore.

On Saturday, September 24, Andrews got inshore again, braved the orders of a harbor guard boat, disregarded three shots fired at him and went on into the town of Fuceta where he scraped the barnacles from the long suffering bottom. The soldiery had reports of cholera in New York, and hence had orders to keep American vessels out until they could be cleared by the inspector. The man who had fired at Andrews, finding who he was, carried him ashore on his back and the town set out to atone for the coldness of their first reception of the captain.

On Tuesday, Captain Andrews ran the bar at Huelva. He had trouble with the port officers over his papers, but he had no trouble when the crowd got him and chaired him shoulder high to the residence of the Governor, Felix Carazons Salas. He was very happy if not very comfortable. He had attained his end at an age when he had discretion enough to appreciate what chances he had taken, and perched upon the shoulders of his carriers, he felt it had been worth it all.

Captain Andrews has been dubbed a notoriety seeker. Well, what of it? He responded nobly to the demands of the situation. A plain sailorman, he appeared on the balcony of the Governor's mansion shouting, "Viva Huelva! Viva Palos! Viva Colon." He knew no other Spanish but the multitude was satisfied. It was voted he should be entertained as a guest of state. Newspapermen thronged to him all night. He went to dinner in the Governor's coach. When he passed, ladies rushed to the housetops to wave at him and cry, "Viva Sapolio," and "Viva American Colon." *La Provincia*, the daily paper of Huelva gave him its whole first page. The Centennial Commission dined him and wined him, the Hotel Colon was made his own for his visit. When he entered the dining-room the guests rose. When he went to the theatre, arriving

a little late, such a cheer went up that the play was unnoticed for a time. He had escaped the sea. He had escaped the two Portuguese gunboats, which, after his visit at Fuceta in Portugal had decided they must hunt down a desperate Yankee smuggler.

He sailed the *Sapolio* up river to Palos surrounded by an escort of honor and was received at the same cathedral from which Columbus had departed. There he prayed out of gratitude for his deliverance from the sea to the good God he had often turned to when afloat.

At last the Queen was announced. Andrews sailed to meet her vessel. He waited on the bar and as her fleet steamed in he bowed to her and she waved her handkerchief at him. He was a part of the ceremony that greeted her arrival.

A Queen! He liked to think of that other Queen who had sold her jewels to give Columbus his chance. He caught the haughty pride of the people well. He was surrounded by ancient grandeur. Had he not embraced his pilot in good Spanish style? Had he not seen to it that he had wine and brandy and a formally presented tobacco pouch? When the pilot was asked how he had known Andrews was from North America, he shrugged and cried, "Well sir, do you think that I knew nothing? What have I been to sea so long for?" Men of a breed, the sea breed, knew each other beyond a fault. Andrews was able to meet heavier demands. Had he not embraced the Governor with the words, "I have the honor of saluting the Governor of a country of cavaliers"? Who can say he did not catch the proper latin fire? But a Queen! The Queen was different. She was to him a wonderful shadow of that other, Isabella of the white arms and a great faith in adventure. And Andrews has been called a lover of notoriety.

Captain William Andrews was formally invited to her dinner. He was accepted with open arms by the Congreso of Americanistas. Then the Queen granted audience. Americans moved up to meet her but the tall man in shabby pilot cloth held back. He had no full dress suit to offer himself in, and he did not wish to appear ridiculous. His pride was as good as a Spaniard's. He contented himself with bowing humbly to her as she passed, when she was kind enough to greet him. Yet Andrews has been dubbed a seeker of notoriety.

It came to an end as all things will. Dinners, balls, theatre parties, receptions, all moved off. Andrews still had a throng of children clinging to him when he walked in the streets, but he had to go. Alfred Johnson had had the idea of exhibiting the *Centennial* at the Centennial Exposition, but did not get back in time. Andrews saw to it that the *Sapolio* was taken to England and shipped to America in time for the World's Fair at Chicago. He travelled with her in a steamer that seemed an inanimate brute after the dainty-footed *Sapolio*. In London he was carried about in street parades travelling over three thousand miles, but he was back in Chicago for the Fair where thousands wondered at the man and the boat. He had to take no other voyage, for his record still stands, but he did. He could not turn his back upon the Atlantic. Once a single-hander always a single-hander seems to be the rule, and in the end Andrews found a berth in Davy Jones' Locker where no true sailor need be ashamed to lie.

 OH! GIVE ME MY BERTH  
IN THE WORST CORNER OF THE BOAT. THE JOY  
TO HEAR THE LEATHER PANELS SOUND UNDER  
THE STROKE OF THE FLYING SPRAY

—*Antiphilos of Byzance*





---

VII: ROW, SAILOR, ROW: *George Herbo and  
Frank Samuelson*

☆☆☆ HERE IS A TALE OF THE JERSEY BEACHES, A STORY WITH A salty swing to it. Forty years ago, up Seabright way, the life of the beach was pretty much the same anywhere. It meant sea and sky and fish and room to stretch between the tricks afloat. There were some who lived always on the beach, a brave few, and then there were the throngs of travelling men who came in with the spring and who stayed only till the fishing was done. Swedes and Negroes, Portuguese and English, with sometimes an Italian or Greek, the fishermen took their places in the little shingled shacks of "Fishing Row."

It was not a fair place to live, "Fishing Row," a hard life of work and sleep, but there were bars to choose from, and gaming to catch the eye before drink addled the wits and made one easy for the night. Of course there was fighting for those who wanted it, rough and tumble fisherman goes, but without knives. The Row had its own champions, men like Pete White with a name for hardiness; each season had its hero, each shack its bully and the whole Row split from end to end into factions. Nights of yellow lamp light streaming through opened doors, big voices, heavy laughter, and the singing of the sand under leather fishing boots and the swishing of it in the chafing of fish-slimed oilers.

Following upon the nights, all too soon came the dawns of quickly growled words and the pushing out of roding polished stem pieces into white crests barely visible through the streaked dark. Oh, a man learned boats living in "Fishing Row," and he learned himself, for there was no hiding vice or virtue on the steep Jersey shore.

A man learned about boats quickly. He learned to judge the sheer and turn of a bilge in terms of life and death. A tricky skiff might throw him into the sea, or a slow one lose him the market every day and end by drowning him in a sea smother just because she could not get in out of it in time. "Two-horse skiffs" they called them because two men could drop over in the knee-deep surf, and one on either side, grasp the boat by the mast bench, hip her, and drag her up clear of the undertow. To go off and on the beach through the surf took a clear head even when the boat was light, but filled with a "fare"—a thousand pounds of fish-cunning was the word.

Time and toil meant nothing. These little skiffs, seventeen feet over all, five, or at the most six strakes deep, were put under sail, once clear of the beach. Their rig was a small sprit-sail and a jib set forward over the bow on a club. They fished from two to ten miles off shore. If it began to blow while they were at work on the Gravellings, or Ladies Lump or farther off still on Rocky Ledge, they fled for Sandy Hook and sailed home inside behind the barrier of dune and scrub pine. When they took the trouble to do that there would be a sea running that breached across the waist of a liner and shook her superstructure, while on the bridge the officers wore oilskins. The bold beach made a wicked surf with no outer bar to break down its sweep. In bad weather there was no lying between the beach and the undertow. In even mod-

erate weather it took care to get off and if you picked a bad slatch your skiff mate found you out. You might bash the skiff, lose oars, seats, scoops, grapnel, water jug. A man had to be tough and able.

Behind these hard livers who so boldly went off to the comfort of deep water with its long, honest heave and its refusal to change into a seething cauldron at the touch of a wind puff, were the clammers of Sandy Hook Bay. This is a comparatively shallow but wickedly open reach. From its waters were taken right manfully the clams the Seabright fishermen used for bait. Frequently a builder set up a Seabright dory and a clamming sloop in the same shop. There were, for instance, the Seamans at the head of the South Shrewsbury River. It was from their yard that the skiff of Elmer Jeffrey was turned out. She was as sweet a thing as ever worked out her life on Sandy Hook Bay. Blow high, blow low, she stood at her work, running off with her rake down and only her jib set, then, when the rake had been gotten in and the mainsail put on her, beating back to windward for another drift.

George Herbo and Frank Samuelson were two Norse clammers who watched Jeffrey work with envy. They saw him hang on when the two-horse skiffs came scudding up the bay from outside with a thick easterly sea making under them, racing for the shelter of the Hook. They were running from the dread stroke of the offshore wind coming on in its might. Jeffrey still worked on the clam beds. There was a call to them in his work, the same call that left them watching the open sea beyond the sand spit on a clear day, wondering what it was like out there. Herbo had tried to find out. He held a pilot's license for New York Harbor. He had gone a-coasting, but found that only a larger bondage. On board a schooner he travelled well-established routes. Voyage

after voyage the same landmarks were picked up, the same allowing for wind and tide, hugging the beach in westerlies to keep out of the sea off shore, and in easterlies seeking sea room almost out of sight of the lights and highlands. Routine was set in coasting. No wonder he had come back to clamming. There was independence of a sort, but always the dim sea line was calling to him. What was it like on the farther stretches where lay blue water and no headlands? A boat like Jeffrey's now and his skiff mate Samuelson—there was the way to find what lay over the sea rim. Meanwhile they clammed and waited.

In 1896 Richard K. Fox of New York became interested in the possibility of man rowing across the ocean. There was daring in it. He would back such a voyage. Herbo took up the matter. He saw a chance to see the farther ocean stretches. He saw himself in a boat like Elmer Jeffrey's. Arrangements were made. Conditions that involved no possible sailing were included. The men who went would have to sleep in knitted hammocks and use an open boat. Herbo and Samuelson agreed to try a passage under oars. Then they turned to the matter of the boat.

They naturally came to Seaman. Had he not gotten out the Jeffrey skiff? A Seaman had built skiffs since there had been such things. There had been Isaac Seaman before the Civil War and then Walter building Seabright dories in the old days when frames were gotten out of apple-wood crooks spaced three-inch centres, and the old pines stood on Sandy Hook. It was this Walter A. Seaman who first began building with split white-oak frames steam bent to shape. William Seaman ran the shop when Herbo and Samuelson came seeking a boat. He listened to their ideas and, with the skiff he had built Jeffrey in mind, designed the *Fox*.



He built her eighteen feet four inches long with a beam of five feet. Her greatest width was about forty per cent of her length from the bow. She was clinker built, good old lap strake upon a flat keel twenty inches wide like a Seabright dory. Since she would not be used to handle nets she was made a double ender. In both the bow and stern he built a water tight compartment under a low turtle-back deck. Admission to these was had only through a port light let into each bulkhead. Good idea, those compartments! They would furnish dry storage space and give reserve buoyancy in case of mishap. Herbo and Samuelson were rather expecting to be capsized and the boat had to be built as nearly unsinkable as possible. To help the righting of her, should she turn turtle with them, two hand-rails were fitted on her bottom below the water line and an extra keel strip two inches square. By clinging to the hand-rail and bracing the feet against this keel they hoped to roll the swamped boat back upon her feet. So righted and then bailed out, she would be as good as ever. She had a long, lean run to make her easy pulling. Planked with cedar, copper fastened, she was honestly built. Her least free-board was twelve inches and she was expected to draw eight inches of water when fully loaded. It is interesting to think the honesty that built her still survives. The name of Seaman still lives in the old calling. The building is now done by H. L. Seaman, the fourth generation of his name to carry on in good fashion.

Herbo and Samuelson gave much thought to equipping the *Fox*. They had a swivel set in both the bow and stern piece to which could be secured a life line for each man. Five pairs of oars went into her, lashed securely. After they left Seaman's yard, tanks for water were put aboard, a twenty-gallon tank forward and four

ten-gallon tanks aft. No mast bench nor centerboard was necessary since the boat was to be rowed all the way. Six gallons of oil to smooth breaking seas, two gallons of signal oil for the lamps and stove, one hundred pounds of bread, canned meats and oatmeal, one dozen Coston Lights and one dozen red and white signals, all went into her. For navigation she carried a compass and a sextant. It would be all they could do to get their latitude; the longitude would have to be dead reckoning. Herbo had enough experience to look after that. A light sea anchor was included as a necessity, for they had no other way of heaving to without mast and sails.

The water and the signals were after all the most vital to them. Rowing the Atlantic would be hard physical work. To be sure they were used to the daily grind of it through their Branchport days, but they would need drinking water and plenty of it. The signals might mean life or death to them. For a thousand reasons it might be necessary to abandon ship. With the aid of the Coston lights they might call down a vessel to their aid. Moreover, their boat was so small and so low in the water, that even if she lived safely enough, a ship's lookout might not see her more than half a mile, but their signal would bring him to on the run. These two knew the hazards of the sea; their forethought was prudent, not timid.

The sailing of the *Fox* was announced in the *New York Herald*. She would leave Battery sea-wall on Saturday, June 6, 1896, at five in the afternoon. The voyage was undertaken for "Such honor and lucre as might accrue from a successful accomplishment." A stiff wording, but it puts their intention clearly. They were going to have a look to see what the Atlantic was really about. For days and nights they would see nothing else for all the thirty-two

hundred fifty miles they expected to cover. Their provisions they estimated would last sixty days and they hoped to make four knots when rowing.

June 6 came fair and the *Fox* was ready for sea, a sweet, slim craft, well stowed and fit for the adventure. As the day wore on spectators began to line the sea-wall. It wasn't every day, even in New York, that one could see two fools throw their lives away. Two thousand people gathered and stood silently waiting for the start. Usually there were two thousand to see the beginning of one of these sailings. Two thousand were there, the same two thousand always on hand—two thousand potential voyagers. They seemed to sense the dangers, the sufferings that lay ahead. They usually stood just so, filled with wonder at something that interested them and something they could not understand. The two voyagers dropped down into the boat. Samuelson went last. He had to bid good-bye to his sister Lena, a blonde girl who cried and wrung her hands. The sea was not new to her, nor its toll. She understood what the men were about. The two thousand looked on coldly. The same lust that filled the Roman arena had brought them to Battery Basin. Men were going out to do the impossible. There was death in their midst. Lena would not be quieted. The *Fox* was ready. The crowd made sure she carried no hidden sail. Herbo tapped the thole pins home with the loom of the oar. The two men seated themselves on the thwarts, each on a fisherman's cushion made of straps nailed to a wooden frame. Lines were cast off. When they had room they shoved out into the ebb tide and the oars flashed as they swung away. A faint cheer went up. Wise cracks followed them. Then they were off upon their voyage, pulling for the Narrows to get the full sweep of the tide. The *Fox* was going to sea.

The two voyagers were gaped at by passing steamers. The *Fox* meant little to them, just a pulling boat working down harbor. The tide was kind, bearing them gaily. The pulling was easy. Then they commenced to feel the swing of the outside swell. Darkness fell and they rowed on. There is none of the dash of a sculler's stroke to the pulling of fishermen. The extreme reach, the rush of slide, the feathered wait, none of these husband strength. The fisherman satisfies himself with a healthy catch, a tug and a release. There will be another stroke, and another, many thousands before the work is done. The crew of the *Fox* had to keep a keen lookout. Theoretically they had the right of way over everything afloat. Actually they knew they were invisible from the bridge of a steamer. It was up to them to keep clear. This first night would be the worst. They intended to keep a little to the south of the steamer lane. A stray sailing ship they might meet, but for the first twenty-four hours it paid them to keep glancing over their shoulders that no steamer should get too close undiscovered.

They bettered their hope of four knots that first night. Then they settled to their planned routine. Each man pulled eighteen hours out of every twenty-four. Five hours were spent in sleep and one in eating. They worked on a schedule that made most of the pulling come at night, when the danger of collision was greatest, and in the day they slept by turns. The *Fox* was to be left without a lookout as little as possible. Aside from the danger of unexpected meetings with ships their greatest fear was exhaustion. No one had ever rowed across the ocean before. There were no rules for the game they played but those they made, and they would never be sure they planned wisely until the damage of their mistakes would be upon them. Their feat was really an

athletic endurance test, but there were no trainers, nor rubbers in mid-ocean. Every hour put them more completely on their own.

By the first dawn land had gone. They were bearing away northeasterly in a reasonable sea. She was a good one, the *Fox*, fine enough to pull easily, but with enough flare to be dry. The weight of her would have broken the hearts of the purely athletic oarsmen, but her men were used to rowing boats with a thousand weight of fish on the floor boards, boats built to carry weight effectively, and the *Fox*, even fully-laden as she was, was more handy. Their strength was the tried endurance of maturity. Herbo was thirty and Samuelson but a few years from it. The sea might overwhelm them, but not because they were unfit for the task. They were old enough to know the scale of their undertaking and to realize that their hope lay in dogged plugging.

From the start they showed a canny sea knowledge. The absence of wind was favorable to them. They did not go out by the way of Nantucket Light Ship. Instead, they held off to the south of the steamer track. Their best ally was the Gulf Stream. They hoped for an estimated daily run of fifty to fifty-four miles. This would give them a passage of sixty-five days. The Gulf Stream offered choppy water and hard work, with the danger of squalls, but it also promised a drift of a knot in the general direction of Europe. A sea mile per hour for every twenty-four hours meant a daily run of better than twenty miles. The advantage of reaching this assistance as quickly as possible more than made up for the danger of being so far from the succor of other ships for most of the passage. To a sailing craft this proposition might reverse itself, but Herbo was sure the *Fox* was best set far on her way as soon as possible. Every mile of water left behind was profitable, and toward the end of the journey, when the Gulf Stream had



lost its force, they would be close enough to the steamer track to make rescue possible if necessary.

The one quality both men had to possess was the infinite patience to carry on, to settle to a routine within their strength, and take things as they came without worry. That ability was the gift of their heredity. No more stubborn, steady-minded sailors than the Scandinavian seamen have ever wrung a living from the sea. It was all in the day's work, no matter what happened. No trace of excited flurry, of neurotic anxiety, haunted their voyage. If it blew, well it would stop in time, if the weather were kind, they did not yield to the desire for a spurt. There is no use in pulling a heavily-laden boat harder than a certain gait. Backs tire, arms stiffen, breath stabs. Pace outwears all haste. The *Fox* had to reach her goal, and that lay three thousand miles over her nose.

Her course carried her below the Newfoundland Banks themselves, but close to the southern tip. They got a touch of fog and plenty of rough weather. It took them a month to make so much northing, and even so, they braved weather when prudence would have prescribed heaving to. At last, caught in the inevitable gale to be met in those dim, grey seas, they let go their sea anchor, the only means they had to hold the boat's head to wind and sea.

On July 10 they took a nasty beating. The wind held steady but the sea was irregular and broken. The *Fox* had all she could do to live. There was no thought of going on; that was out of the question. As the pitching became more crazy each man fastened himself to the boat by a life line. Any moment a sea might sweep them clean. It was the part of discretion. There was relief from the toil of rowing, but instead they had to wait, utterly powerless to resist the gale, unable to see ahead for the blinding spray ripped from the crests in showers. The *Fox*

lifted well for a boat so heavily laden, but from time to time a cruel cross-sea would send her flying, shoving her down upon her gunwale. The two men could do nothing but shake their heads and wait patiently. They could not make themselves heard above the shriek of the gale and the babel of roaring seas. It could not have been worse had they been in the surf on some drear beach.

At last it came, a breaking sea. It was not greater than many the *Fox* had ridden safely, but it caught them quartering on the bow. It lifted its head, its face hollowed, its mane of wind-torn foam roaring. Then it fell. The *Fox* tried to lift to it but it swept her round and boat and men vanished in a white boiling. They heard the rumble of it pass from where they struggled deep in its bosom. Curiously distant, that moiling crest sounded in the quiet of burying water. There was no storm below, no spatter of stinging spray levelled at the face, but instead the chill Bank water that shocked the nerves, and above them the unknown depths. Each man pulled himself clear and made toward the boat. The life lines, they had fastened, held. The boat was still there. It was an age before their heads came clear and they were back in the windy chaos.

The *Fox* had capsized and lay water-logged and filled, her gunwales awash. Fortunately, her compartments in the bow and stern kept her afloat. The sight of her upturned keel and the gleam of her wet bottom struck terror into their blood. They righted her and began to bail. As fast as they threw it out she would dip crazily, hungry for rest, willing to fill and give over. Each man clung upon a side of her, trying to keep the heave of the sea from turning her again bottom side up. Every purring crest flooded her, sweeping over the gunwales. It was not the place nor time for a faint heart nor flighty head. The water was

cold, not so bad, but cold. The two fishermen worked as men can when death is very close and their imaginations have not made cowards of them. Gradually the boat rose in answer to the relief of the weight. They bailed doggedly. Only an occasional sea licked along her sides and splashed in. At last she was up. They climbed in and began to take account of their plight.

Their spare oars were still lashed in place. The water tanks were fast, but everything loose was gone. Europe was sunk. Their thoughts had no time for such things then. The wind chilled them through their drying clothes. It was a five-day bout between their hardihood and the malice of the sea. There was little food left and no way to cook, for the stove had gone. They got in their sea anchor and held her up with the oars. What rest they got was negligible. At last they were under way. It was better to row. The mind was steadier so, the pinched stomach and chilled blood did not annoy so much while they kept their tricks. In spite of it all they could realize they were carrying on. Europe came to their minds again as a probable destination, almost equally probable with the port of missing ships.

On July 15, along came the Norwegian barque *Sita* bound from Quebec to Pembroke, England. She spoke them and finding they were Scandinavian blood, took them on board, gave them hot food, the first they had had since the capsize on the tenth. The same gale that had raised such havoc with the *Fox* had blown the barque to the southward. Hot food puts heart in a man. When the two adventurers saw help at hand there was a great temptation to give it up, to be sensible. Another time no help might come. Why not go on with the *Sita*? A hot meal changed that. They looked on the *Fox* with renewed interest. Gifts of food were made. They went down into the boat and held on their way.

They would get to England yet with just half-way reasonable luck. Their oars rose and fell determinedly after Herbo put away safely a signed testimonial from the barque's master that he had met them and they had no motive power but their oars.

Perhaps the people of the *Sita* were better able to understand the madness of these rowers than most. They were of the blood of Harold of the Bluetooth, of the sea rovers who made the monks in Ireland build towers of retreat where they could escape the wild forays of the Vikings, of the ragged and sea-wracked band who wrung Normandy from the King of France by terrifying him in Paris. No doubt many a man watching the boat drop astern wondered why he had not attempted such a feat, for these men were seeing life at their own will, not rushed to Pembroke at the urge of the owners sitting at desks in far off Norway. For them, the meeting of the *Fox* was a pleasant interlude in the marrying of braces, letting go jibs, hauling the spanker amidship and then the mad scurrying of heaving the fore-yards round as the barque paid off with the fore sail aback. For the two venturers in the *Fox* the barque was a saver of life and even more important, a renewer of spirit. No omen could have been fairer than the meeting of her.

The northern seas are almost never calm and Herbo and Samuelson were climbing into what early navigators such as Davis and Frobisher called a "goodly height." It was by their latitude alone that they navigated, with only a guess at their easting. This is really not so careless as it sounds. Many a collier coming out of Falmouth or Plymouth, bound north through the English Channel still navigates no more carefully. An old hog yoke quadrant serves to give the altitude of the sun. Even the old 89.48 rule serves well enough for such work on an eastward run to the lights of the French coast. Cape Gris Nez has one of the most powerful

lights in the world to aid just such seekers of their way. Chronometers cost money, and a collier has to compete to live. It has been proven again and again in trans-Atlantic small boat passages that navigation is quite secondary to seamanship. Herbo as a licensed pilot was equal to the demands of his voyage.

After the *Sita* they fell in with another barque of Norway, the *Eugene*. She was bound from Halifax to Swansea and was perhaps none too well found herself, but she was both surprised and pleased enough to spare them bread and water. Rowing across the Atlantic on reduced rations is no joke. Food a man can forego by taking another notch in his belt and setting himself anew to his task, but to be thirsty and have to exert one's self, at physical labor through long eighteen-hour spells, that is almost impossible. Even sixty gallons is not enough for that and so the *Eugene* was very welcome to the rowers. They asked and received another certificate that the *Fox* had no hidden means of propulsion. Oars and oars alone, admitted the Norwegian skipper, proud of his countrymen and recognizing very well the doubts that would be noised about if ever the *Fox* got through.

The two men had passed the peak. There is a point in such physical strain up to which a man's body responds to his will. He grows lean, but hard. His muscles take the training nobly, proving what an excellent animal the human can be in necessity. Then follows a period of fitness, the peak of condition, which may last for a long or short time, depending upon the individual and upon the continuity of the arduous demand upon him. Every athlete knows this. Close upon this comes staleness, without apparent reason. The man enters upon a condition which is critical. He is bound toward exhaustion. Between the time the rowers left the *Eugene* and their making England, the oarsmen reached this



stage. The oars came to be a torture. The periods of sleep were broken by the nightmare of labor just a few hours ahead. Herbo and Samuelson found themselves in water where the big winds are always making and they were stale.

There is no telling the story of those last few weeks. The feeling of achievement becoming impossible, the chimera of days stretching ahead filled with more and more torture. Had either man yielded, the voyage would have been done. Had they been of a less stubborn breed, the grind would have broken them, but at last there came a morning when they looked ahead and looked away only to look again and find it true—land did lie beyond. The *Fox* had reached England. In an hour a despatch was flying over the cable from the Scilly Islands, dated July 31, 1896.

“Rowboat *Fox* passed eleven A. M. Two occupants were well but somewhat exhausted.”

They had rowed across the Atlantic in fifty-four days.

After a few days' rest they rowed on to Havre arriving on August 7, 1896.

Their adventures were not over. When they had finished exhibiting in Europe they took a steamer home and had a passage that made them thankful for their good luck in going over. Head winds and terrific seas held them up. Coal ran low and gave out. At last the crew were reduced to burning bulkheads and everything wooden the ship afforded, but when still two hundred fifty miles off New York her fires died, steam went down and she lay a helpless hulk. It was then that Herbo and Samuelson proved themselves heroes of the gay nineties. The *Fox* was unlashed from her cradle and lowered. Herbo and Samuelson cast off to

row to New York for aid. To most men two hundred fifty miles in the open sea would have seemed a daring effort, but to trans-Atlantic voyagers it was but a four-day cruise, just a bit of off-hand training work to keep from losing the knack of it. They made it in safety, sent help off to the steamer and became the stars of Huber's Museum. The last effort "for humanity" made them worth twenty dollars a day each to the Museum as well as a share for the boat. When the boys came up from Jersey there was a grand welcome for them in New York, for Herbo and Samuelson had become great men, able to wear diamonds and dress with the best. None were envious of them for none cared to match their feat, and the fun they got out of it themselves, well, it made a fairy tale ending seem quite tame in view of the virgin splendor of the two adventurers.

There are, however, never golden days forever for anyone. The *Fox* and her men became almost permanent exhibits on the museum floor, but there came an ending to the matter and the show value of the feat was over. Herbo consulted Samuelson and Samuelson consulted Herbo and both found they were little the richer, for all the money had passed through their fingers in their New York days. It was a sad awakening, no doubt, but there was no use lamenting vain pomp and glory. They got themselves and their only remaining capital together and with the *Fox* bid good-bye.

Six years after their voyage there were two men very like Herbo and Samuelson clamming out of a black, rusty sloop, hard at work on Sandy Hook Bay. On the whole they seemed no sadder than most of us, nor more concerned. If they were older, well that was the dirty trick of time, and if they no longer looked out across the shoals to the open sea, that was because they had drunken their

fill of the wonders of the unknown, and had grown wise with the surge of their hopes turned into memories of the *Fox* and foreign parts. For they were at home in the streaked and dingy cabin of the sloop, with the lap of the bay chop upon her planks. Where would two Jersey men go for a home but back to their beaches with the stars and the sea and the fish?



 "I'M AN OLD MAN," HE  
SAID, "AND I SHOULD LIKE ONCE MORE TO GO TO  
SEA BEFORE IT IS TOO LATE"

—*Arthur Ransome*





---

## VIII: A POET GOES TO SEA AGAIN: *Captain Joshua Slocum*

☆☆☆ OF ALL SINGLE-HANDERS NONE IS SO WELL REMEMBERED as Captain Joshua Slocum. He came out of Nova Scotia and became American. He turned from the beautiful Annapolis valley toward the bleak, grey outer waters to learn his profession, for he never had any of the glorified amateur about him. The plain Queen Anne never saw her valley nor would she have understood the impulse that fired the boy. From the first he sought the honest blue cloth of his trade that has come down from the Phœnicians. It was all work for him, but honorable, with something to be learned and enjoyed. He passed from a brief boyhood to the fishing fleet as naturally as a seal from the rocks of its birth to the open sea as soon as it has been taught to swim by its parents. They tried to make a cook of him but it would not do. They tried to make a fisherman of him, but that wouldn't do either. His desire to be sea-going drove him to deep water to learn the ways of flying ships, ships with royals and skysails and occasional stunsails.

In his youth there were plenty of ships under our flag, proud, tall ships that knew their way to a thousand ports. He sailed in them, marvelling at their spread of canvas, learning his way to the fife-rail in the dark, acquiring a detailed professional knowl-

edge. It was on board them that he became a poet, a poet in his soul. Queer that, the distinct tendency of this man to become efficient as a sailorman, and yet to grow always more understanding of world life. In his early days at sea Americans still manned their own ships. Good blood gave its best to making fast passages. Families were not ashamed to own a sea captain and men of education looked upon the sea as a path to fortune. There was little to show that we would ultimately turn from the sea, leaving steam to German ships with their Chinese crews, and sail to half-starved British seamen, eking out a living on Board of Trade rations, who in turn would surrender to even more unfortunate Scandinavians.

Slocum took to foreign voyages, going far south on his way to Australia, lying to off the hongs at Canton, wondering what mysteries waited within the forbidden Nippon, laughing with the natives of the Spice Islands. All this he saw from the viewpoint of a fo'c'sle man looking forward to the day to come when he would stand upon the quarter-deck, even pace that sacred stretch to starboard, where the old man reigned in solitary grandeur. Every voyage he learned more of the ways of ships, and voyages were frequent, so that he came to feel the narrow limits of his bunk and the painted beams overhead to be home and the fo'c'sle breath to be friendly, while all ashore was a strange world through which he could hardly find his way. It was slow work, but thorough. A seaman climbing aft felt almost as if he belonged there before he earned a right to his papers. Side by side with professional skill Slocum learned to see beauty. Another man would have burst into verse, but for him there was but the chantey and the silence of long watches. Much of the sailor's emotion went into those old chanties; they were his acceptance of the esthetic and of the

ribald. The heartiness of the singing was a good index of the fulness of soul that had come to the crew, although no one talked of it in that way. Ships bred reticence in such matters, so Slocum gave no voice to his dreams.

He earned little, but what he earned he saved. In time he made his way aft. Finally, he was in command of the famous *Northern Light*. She was one of the finest vessels afloat, a big, driving brute with a powerful rig. Not so dainty as the earlier *Flying Cloud* or *Mandarin*, but an able descendant of the clippers of the gold rush. Slocum not only commanded her, but was a part owner, an ideal arrangement for a ship captain. By virtue of her size it was necessary to keep her on the regular tracks of trade. She could make no money except where there was plenty to be made. Slocum tired of her regularity. He admired all she showed him, but she carried him over beaten tracks. He raced her against the steamers in good winds and beat them. He drew from her every thrill she would give, but at last he exhausted her power to please. He had had the fun of the prince of all of them. He longed for irregularity.

So he bought the *Aquidneck*. She was a little barque. Ah, there was a witch. He bought her for her beauty, and she had that. He selected her with a cunning eye, and she went where there was no profit for the majestic *Northern Light*. Those were pleasant days for him that he liked to talk about ever after. She would do things that larger ships were denied, a whole bag of tricks. Twenty years as a shipmaster he finished out in her, and would probably never have left her, but even the cleverest fail sometime and the *Aquidneck* went ashore on the coast of Brazil, a total wreck. Out of her Slocum built a boat he called a canoe, although she was more like a huge dory. She was thirty-three

feet long, seven and a half feet beam and three feet deep. She had three masts and battened sails, more like a Chinese junk than a craft of the western ocean. She carried his wife, baby, two sons and himself safely home, as the intrepid captain said, "without accident." The voyage took them the length of the north Atlantic and many a mile to boot, but he made light of it. It was enough to get safely home.

America had turned her back upon the sea by then. The whole country had devoted itself to internal growth. In the west the pioneer had taken his rifle and turned it into a crowbar to build railroads. Slocum saw nothing for himself there. He had lived all his life in close touch with the sea, that thoughtful intimacy that comes only to those who live on the deck of a sailing ship. At middle age he found himself on the beach. He tried to get a ship, but two years of search brought him only disappointment. His proud sailing craft had turned into barges, ending their days on tow lines behind the powerful tugs that were coming into fashion. In the twenty years Slocum had spent in his idyll of command the world at home had changed completely. The captain was at his wit's end to fit himself into the altered pattern. The sea-stretches called him, and at middle age, when most men of his trade had looked upon retirement, he could not settle down, nor yet could he go a-roving. It was a bad time for a seafaring heart.

Slocum had become philosophical over the years. If he could not sail a ship, he might at least turn builder. He knew construction to the last fastening, the ultimate drift bolt. When he went after work at that he lost another illusion. He touched organization. He must join a union in order to successfully enter employment. There was no organization for him. He had never given himself up to the idea of other than single-handed energy, stand-



ing upon his own merits and ability. He turned from the idea of ship-building in disgust. What, what could a sailor do ashore? His dilemma grew to a torment. Which, where and how? These things his philosophy could not answer, but he kept his courage, looking everywhere for a way out.

Then one day in 1892, as he trod the crunching snow of Boston's waterside, he met Captain Eben Price. They were old friends. Price was one of New Bedford's successes. Old age found him settling back in ease. For him there were no more whaling cruises. Jovial and friendly, he slowly came to understand Slocum's quandary. Many good men were on the beach those days. Sailor's Snug Harbor at Staten Island was full of men looking down the Narrows for the command that never came. Boston had her quota, but Slocum was a different sort. There was a lot left in him.

For nearly ten years Price had owned a sloop he had been unable to turn to account. He had beached her at last, when she became a trouble to keep afloat without too much attention, and there she had sat. When Slocum had talked out his troubles in his leisurely, gentle way, the memory of the forsaken sloop came back to Captain Eben. Half in jest he offered it. He did it fairly, without any attempt at deceit. He began as a joke, but Slocum could see no humor in an offered ship. He had been the master of the best. There was no mercy to be found ashore. He would go up to Fairhaven where the sloop was hauled out into a meadow and look her over. Any ship was better than none.

He found her high and dry. There she was when he stripped off the canvas cover. He looked upon her half erased name, *Spray*, and she sat in a meadow where in two months spring flowers would be lifting their faces to the shelter of her keel. He ex-

amined her and sat down to think it over. She was rotten from stem to stern. Well, he had wanted to build a ship. She was little more than a skeleton, her planks gone to punk between wind and water, her decks unsound, her oak stem piece ragged and porous as a piece of sad driftwood. She was his. He looked upon her and dreamed a dream. He forgot her condition and saw a ship grow before his eyes. Her lines were good. In all seas he had studied the way of vessels and he knew this for a good one, only she was a wreck. Captain Price had told him much and he found out the rest for himself. When he had finished dreaming he got up a little wearily and went to work. What he had was little more than the form over which to build a vessel, but there was no denying his gratitude. He accepted the *Spray*.

Slocum had no money to order material from the sawmills. There would be no feverish shipyard methods about his work. There was white oak standing near by, good white oak such as can seldom be bought for a price to-day. He felled a tree and had it hauled in by a farmer. He went back and chose material for his ribs, breast hooks and knees, chose it standing. Everything he got out with his own hands. An old iron pot was set up for a boiler, and a wooden flue fashioned for a steam box. Slocum came of a family used to taking all they needed from the wilderness. He scarcely realized how queer his natural actions seemed to the Fairhaven folk.

Fairhaven and New Bedford are almost one. Word got about that some fool was at work on the *Spray*. She had become a landmark rather than a ship. There was many a chuckle about it and a joke or two made. Idle whaling captains strolled out to see what sort of man could be so crazy, but they had not counted on Slocum. He received them like a prince. He stopped his work

to talk to them as long as they chose. Then he showed them the new hull he had gotten out by hand, and the stem piece he was fitting to it. They found he was a salty man with a bitter sea touch, who had been over the seven seas and in his mild way could match them story for story. They had come to scoff, but they bore back the story of a miracle. No man ever saw a keel go into an old boat in better fashion, and the stem was good enough to give confidence even to a whaling captain, who cares nothing for speed, but all for staunchness. The man had gotten that stem piece out of the natural crook of pasture white oak, single-handed as usual. New Bedford took an interest in the *Spray*.

Little things had a place in the heart of Slocum. He took time for everything. He stopped work to look upon the wonder of the apple-trees bursting into bloom. That was while he was setting his well-squared ribs for the old sloop. His was no repair job, it was a rebuilding. It would be a long time before she was ready to take the water, meanwhile he did the simple jobs at hand. When the daisies came he marvelled at them, and soon the cherries were ripe. These he ate between whiles, for it was his nature to make a festival at every task completed. He even took time to find that a grave close at hand held the remains of an old settler for whose memory he had a true reverence. Whale captains came to talk. They were men of his own cloth whom he understood and appreciated. He welcomed advice, but took his own way. He knew a thing or two about this work. There were long hours put in with an adz, for everything had to be gotten out by hand. While he rested he thought and talked. Direct and straightforward as he was, he was cosmopolitan. He won the interest of the Fairhaven people. They stopped sympathizing and came to admire.

Slocum was building a ship, not a yacht. He used planking an inch and a half thick. The timbers were heavy enough to butt ice. The new bulwarks were built on white oak stanchions and sheathed in white pine. His decks were as heavy as his planks but laid narrow in three-inch widths. The carlines that held the decks were husky sticks six by six inches, spaced three feet centres. He let in two trunks for cabins. One, the forward, was six feet by six. Here he intended to cook. The after cabin where he intended to live amid his equipment, arranged in bins and racks about him, was ten by twelve. They stood three feet above the deck and the floor of each was let down into the hull far enough to give the captain full head room. In the hold, between the cabins, was room for his bulk stores. The *Spray* was a generously built craft with plenty of room. The butts of her planks were fastened with bolts and drawn down by nuts screwed tight against washers. This spared the use of clamps in building and gave a stronger job. Slocum was a Nova Scotian by blood, but he was a full fledged Yankee in ingenuity.

A new boat rose out of the old. He was professional toward her. It has always been the custom to consider a ship so rebuilt as the original ship. For years the old English East India Company so built upon old bottoms, as they called it, and the new ships were of course given the name of the old. Lloyds decreed the practice in the dim and mouldy past, and as a practical shipman, Slocum thought of his boat always in the terms of her early form. She was still the *Spray*, although it was hard to find much of the old about her. When he had finished she was thirty-six feet, nine inches over all and nearly fifteen feet in beam. Like larger vessels of her day, she was measured not in draft but in the depth of her hold, four feet, two inches. She came to nine tons

net, as pretty a packet of the sort as a man could wish, but certainly nothing of the yacht about her.

When the building was finished she was practically tight without caulking, but Slocum took no chances. He ran cotton into her seams, driving it home cheerily, and then, on top of that a thread of oakum after the fashion of a big one. If she got to working in a sea, the cotton alone might have gone adrift. The oakum helped that. The rudder was hung, she was painted and then launched. She was a swan to her builder. That was Slocum: a swan, daisies, cherries, apple blossoms. Here was a seaman-poet, but he put his song into the *Spray* and he might have done worse. She was tight and able again. She had cost him close to six hundred dollars and more than a year of work. Some of the money he earned working in the yards at Fairhaven on other ships; the rest he had taken from his savings, an investment of love, a sacrifice to poetry. A more sophisticated and less professional man might have tried lecturing to bolster his fortunes. Slocum put everything into the *Spray* and when he took Captain Eben Price for her first sail he was subtly acknowledging his gratitude in the way of a sailor. He was not of the good blue cloth for nothing.

Fairhaven was troubled during his year of work. At first they had jeered, but as Slocum had become known and appreciated, their concern ceased to be humorous and became sincere. What was the work worth? What could be done with her now she was launched again? To Slocum the thing that mattered was the feel of his own deck under his feet. He was no longer young. It was a marked descent from the quarter-deck of the *Northern Light*, or even the beautiful *Aquidneck* to the *Spray*. In his day a man who lost his money was ruined, and often spent the rest of his life contemplating the fact. Slocum was a ruined man with a boat



on his hands to boot. It was the high-hearted Hildebrand, who went down somewhere off Greenland, who once said sagely, "Everything about a ship wears out with astonishing rapidity." Slocum had paid little attention to time in his work ashore, but afloat that would not do. The *Spray* would be wearing out. What could he do with her? While Fairhaven still wondered, Slocum sailed away on his own. He had begun as a single-hander. He tried first a season's fishing, but had no knack for it. Fishing is work of a lifetime itself, and a middle-aged master of sail who had spent his life upon the seas of the world had not a lifetime left in which to learn. The season's fishing was not a success.

Then a call came to him for bolder work. Like Arthur Ransome's ancient on the Baltic cruise of the *Racundra* he faced the truth. It was unpleasant to meet the truth so frankly, but it had to be done.

"I am an old man," said the ancient, "and I should like to go to sea once more before it is too late."

Slocum felt the fire that carries some men of fifty into violent excesses. Time was gripping him. He must wring from life what he desired, and close with it quickly, if at all. The apple blossoms might open for him a dozen times. Who could tell? He was strong and without sickness, but he could look down hill into the valley and clear-eyed meditate upon the uncertainty of anything. Yes, he would heed the call. He would go to sea once more, to off shore waters that could be trusted.

He was ready to go except for instruments. A faithful compass, a good quadrant, these he had, but his chronometer needed overhauling. He found that would cost fifteen dollars. Fifteen dollars! Did they think he was made of money? Yet most mas-

ters would not have thought of a long voyage without one. His latitude he could work, but his longitude, even a slight error in his chronometer made a difference there. He had decided upon a long voyage, a very long one, nothing less than to sail around the world. Well, the chronometer could wait. At the start, he would be coasting and the lack of correct time could rest in the lap of fortune. Something might be done about it in the future.

On April 24, 1895, he sailed from Boston, a poet upon a voyage. In reality, he was headed for Gloucester to get cheaply there such supplies as he needed. In fantasy he was seeking freedom. Joyfully he set his flag to the southerly wind, thrilled at the sound deck under him and the open sea ahead. To him the *Spray* was bewitched. She made out of the harbor smartly. He greeted the wheeling gulls as brothers. He looked up at the clean sun gratefully. When he swept past the wreck of a steamer he took her warning light-heartedly. The *Spray* was making seven knots. Fascinated, he watched her buffet the bay chop. Jewels, he thought, the fire of precious jewels in the flung spray. Fortune was come aboard. He passed rocky Nahant and the stub of Marblehead. There was a capful of wind, but it was free and the *Spray* ran well. The harbor of Gloucester opened, white under the wind. He ran in boldly and berthed her beside a dock without so much as scraping a piling. It was his first handling of the sloop alone. He gave the credit to Fortune, but after all he was a seaman. It was not astonishing he should berth her so cleverly as to meet the critical taste of Gloucester fishermen. Yet it was fortunate, for they recognized his cloth by his sailing, and when he had talked with them they made his voyage their own. In the two weeks he lay at the pier Gloucester showed him much kindness. Dry cod were sent aboard. He was made a gift of cop-

per paint, and he put the *Spray* ashore on the hard bottom, scraped her and put two coats of the paint to use. They gave him an anchor light, a "fisherman's own" which pleased him immensely. He took a cast-off dory and cut her down for a tender. Someone gave him a barrel of oil to make a slick with when the sea got too rough. He took all these favors humbly, even to a two-burner lamp for his cabin. Kindness warmed his heart, kindling his spirit. He hastened to get to sea that the trust of these folk in him might be justified. An Ulysses, he sailed on May 7 fired with heroic urge. He gave true value to the flutter of white handkerchiefs he left behind. It was prophetic of what he would experience so often; the sad courtesies of farewell, the gladness of adventure ahead. Slocum was of a temper for his undertaking.

The twin lights of Thatcher's Island he put upon his stern and with the wind on his quarter steered a course to carry him across the Bay of Fundy. On Cashe's Ledge he caught a supply of fish and hove to for the night. He awoke to find a heavy sea and storm scud driving across the moon. He headed back to Monhegan Light and ran up behind Pemaquid to Round Island Pond where he lay for a day, resting and listening to the wind in the pines. When the next day came fair he sailed again. He was bound to use all caution while he could and he knew the sea well enough to pick his time. The weather did not look right, so he went coasting on down the Maine Islands, for there was no use throwing away the plentiful harborage at hand if things got bad.

Fantasy took hold of him there. The sea was smooth and kind. For years he had not had such an opportunity to loiter afloat. He passed an island of a thousand voices croaking in all keys. He forgot it had ever been discovered so it became for him Frog

Island. As the bay narrowed and the coast turned east toward Nova Scotia he passed Gannet Rock near Grand Manan Island and out of pleasure he called it the Island of Birds. Kindliness and poetry blended in the man, but he was cautious. His profession made that a prerequisite to a seaman. That was the reason he had worked his way round with harbors always close at hand. The Bay of Fundy tides are a proverb of the sea and Captain Slocum fell in with a rip that battered the *Spray* in good earnest, but apparently outside of making her too lively for comfort, neither man nor boat was injured.

After touching at Westport he pushed on to Yarmouth. The weather had been bad for the season and held still unfavorable. Your sailing ship master knows when to drive and when to loaf along. Beyond Cape Sable lay the salt drear miles. From his years in square-riggers Slocum knew it was futile to wear out gear and man trying to beat against head winds in the open sea. That wasn't the way to make the run. What he needed was a slant, a fair wind, strong and steady. The easterly weather took its own time to give up. Meanwhile, Slocum stowed everything with care, lashed his dory tender on deck, made everything as sea-going as possible.

One thing he still lacked, but so far had not needed. His own unserviceable chronometer he had left at home. In Yarmouth he bought a damaged tin alarm clock. There was certainly no more famous tin clock in the world. There are legends of it on the Potomac, and at Capetown, as well as in the decorous naval port of Gibraltar. Captain Slocum was always proud of that clock and never wearied of talking about it. It cost him less than a tenth of the cost of repairs on his chronometer, and it ran merrily in spite of both damp and cold.

At last, on July 1, he rose to find fair weather. It was a clear, crisp morning, just the breeze for a run down toward Cape Sable in smooth water under the lee of the Nova Scotian coast. He followed round the Cape, close in, and by evening was hard upon Chebucto Light off Halifax harbor. Taking his departure from George's Island, he bade good-bye to the main, dropping the lights one by one, watching them vanish a little wistfully, no doubt. By July 4, he saw the ray of Sable Island Light cut the sea edge, and sounding from time to time, knew he was passing the Island. Fog came down, and a big sea made under it. He was lonely then, lost from everything. He had no officers to exchange words with. To make his loneliness even worse he made a discovery that the *Spray* could be balanced by proper sail trimming to steer herself. It was an important thing to be learned, but it took from him his last occupation. He had left only his loneliness.

Scarcely any of the lone voyagers escaped that experience. The larger the boat, the greater the security, the heavier their lone position struck at them. Men sailing in very small craft had their hands full to keep alive, but Slocum had a big, comfortable hull under him and time to have the fit fall upon him with full force. Through a hole in the fog he spied the moon and talked to it, only to have his voice accentuate his loneliness. Queerness reached his mind. He became introspective, living in memory and his memory was a storehouse of experiences in strange parts of the world. Dead voices spoke again. Unimportant things rose side by side with important. Slocum knew this was unhealthy, and he welcomed the heavy work of his first gale with relief, a saving struggle. Afterward he sang. That was better than talking. Men did sing to themselves naturally, but talk to one's self was a hol-



low sham. He did little more of that. It led to thought, but song relieved the emotions.

He made good progress in those first eight days—twelve hundred miles, and much of it the *Spray* sailed on her own. On the fifteenth of July he met a Spanish barkentine bound for Vigo. Her captain sent his card and a bottle of wine on board. He was shocked to find a man alone in mid-ocean. What sort could he be to venture his life so carelessly? The *Spray* spoke for her skipper by sailing the barkentine out of sight in a few hours. That big mainsail was giving the sloop a fine passage.

The next day she overtook an English barque. Her captain was a sodden sort, none too pleased to see the sloop catch him so easily in the light air. Slocum knew his bullying type, when he hailed gruffly asking how long it had been calm. Slocum answered he did not know, he hadn't been there long and added he was fourteen days out of Cape Sable. The mate laughed. The man at the wheel snickered cautiously, the watch was amused. The captain of the barque accepted the situation, ordered his mate to haul down his flag and became friendly since he could not bully the lone skipper. Slocum knew his man.

Whether it was the speaking of the two ships or the friendly gamboling of the porpoises, or the power of the voyager himself, it is hard to say, but certain it is Slocum knew the charm of frightful loneliness was broken and he suffered no more from it. He had won free by keeping his sense of humor. He emerged his sunny self.

On the eighteenth he was passed by the steamer *Olympia* and got his longitude as 34.50 W. and his time. No one ever heard of trying to rate a tin alarm clock like a chronometer, yet apparently that was what Slocum was up to. He was a careful seaman and

a good navigator, for on the morning of the nineteenth he made a landfall as he expected. It was no mere matter-of-fact bit of routine to him. He saw a silver mountain, mystic, wonderful. He had made out that land before on other voyages, and he knew the peak by its shape for Flores in the Azores. The next morning he saw Pico on the starboard bow, and plotting his position, he laid a course for Fayal. He landed there on the twentieth, eighteen days out from Cape Sable, and as he would have said himself, "without accident."

He liked these isolated people. He knew their hunger for word from the outside world and the interest in anything new. He was strange to them, but he felt sure of their good will. The American consul set the pace by doing him honor. The Portuguese navy sent him an officer as pilot. The islanders thronged the *Spray*. Slocum was taken for a day's drive ashore. His reception was so kind he stayed four days at Fayal. He got along very well with everyone. On July 24 he sailed. Squalls came on at once and he had his hands full. He carried away a weather lanyard and had an encounter with a guard boat which took him for a smuggler. Finally he got away past Pico. For four days he had lived on fresh food and he had brought with him some plums. The life ashore, or the plums, or both, disagreed with him. He was taken with the cramps and was just able to get his sails reefed and hoisted away again when his illness overcame him. He went down with a fever, unable to go on deck, and soon became delirious. Meanwhile the *Spray* slogged along on her own, while he raved and tossed below until his fever broke. In a day or two he recovered to find his decks washed clean of everything movable and the *Spray* still sailing herself at a lively rate. First he threw the plums, which he blamed for his illness, over the

side, next he made a good meal for himself. He must have strength, and that quickly. Food was what he needed. The sickness had left him for good, for which he was very thankful, although he continued to blame himself for carelessness. He was a careful, seamanly soul.

On July 31 he had to take charge in earnest, for a gale came snorting down. It blew his jib into rags but he did not care. Nothing could stop the *Spray* he felt sure by then and he was hourly picking up signs of land. He spent an afternoon reading the life of Columbus. As he read he noted the birds flew always one course. There lay Spain waiting to be rediscovered. In the morning he sighted land and knew he had crossed the Atlantic. Historic waters these with the past written upon them in honorable deeds. Coming up with the land he followed it down toward the Strait of Gibraltar. He outsailed two barques, and made the harbor just twenty-nine days from Cape Sable.

Gibraltar is not a friendly place to most. Slocum's first encounter was with the port doctor, and his papers did not please the fellow. They raved and roared at one another, but finally the doctor's spleen was vitiated and he gave the *Spray* free pratique. There could be no greater compliment to Captain Slocum's ability to make friends. He had a charm of manner which if not lordly was never cringing. He could handle more difficult men than choleric port doctors without yielding. The *Spray* came to anchor in the outer harbor.

The British are very slow. It took them until next morning to find out anything unusual had happened. Then official Gibraltar awoke to the feat of the lone Yankee. It would have done Captain Eben Price good to see the fuss his discarded sloop set astir. A launch that overreached the *Spray* on both ends by sev-

eral feet raced up to the sloop and halted alongside all aquiver, navy fashion. It was Admiral Bruce's barge bearing the Admiral's compliments. The *Spray* was towed in to a snug berth. They found Slocum a good sort but odd. The British heart was opened to the intrepid single-hander. They could not do enough for him. Sail makers were put at making a new jib. Repairs were offered without stint. The Admiral himself came aboard to shake hands with a man who could jam such a boat across the Atlantic in less than a month. Every ward room in the fleet clamored for Slocum as a dinner guest. And, to top it, the governor, the knighted Carrington, and the commander of the battleships attached to the station, came to put their signatures to the *Spray's* log. No merchant captain was ever more fêted. Slocum went everywhere in his ordinary clothes as much thought of as if he had appeared in full dress. He had done with one little sloop what neither the French nor the Spanish fleets had been able to do,—he had captured Gibraltar.

Mind, this was Gibraltar, the tightest place of guarded military secrets in the world. Slocum was shown the fortifications. Sentries meant nothing to him. The Admiral sent off vegetables and milk to the *Spray*. All was done with a gracious by-your-leave as if the British acquired merit by honoring their guest. Captain Slocum measured up to it all. He may have enjoyed the bleak rock, the storm twisted trees, the naive native wine shops, the colorful outer harbor filled with local craft, but he revelled in the manly welcome to the full. It did not turn his head; he was too old for that. He was poet enough to take the decorative background of Gibraltar as a symbol of success and let it rest there. When a day's excursion to Morocco was offered he went gladly on board the torpedo boat provided and wrung the joy out of the

day's experience. Torpedo boats were new then. We had only the *Ericsson* and the *Winslow* in our own navy. Slocum marvelled at the sleek power of the British boat, but he came back to the *Spray* with satisfaction. The speed and efficiency of the English craft were interesting, but to him naval life was not real sea-going.

His Atlantic passage was of course only the beginning of his world cruise. He had intended to go up the Mediterranean to Suez, but he heard everywhere of pirates, and so, when he left Gibraltar, he chose the dangers of the sea rather than the hazards of the African picaroons and crossed the Atlantic again to Pernambuco bent on reaching Cape Horn. He would go round in the track of Magellan, but he held the days at Gibraltar a precious memory, and Gibraltar talked of the man for years. The *Spray* is surely the most famous sloop that ever left American shores, and Slocum the ideal single-hander, an old man whose faithfulness to his calling, and time-tried wisdom are still the marvel of seamen the world over.





 O SHIP, WHO ART EN-  
TRUST WITH VIRGIL: MY PRAYER IS, THAT THOU  
MAYEST LAND HIM SAFE ON THE ATHENIAN  
SHORE, AND PRESERVE THE HALF OF MY SOUL

—*Horace*—ODE III



---

## IX: A TOUGH ONE: *Captain Howard Blackburn*

☆☆☆ HERE IS THE SAGA OF A MAN, AN OLD MAN NOW, NOT so big as he once was, but a man for all that, much of his burly power still his, his blue eyes clear and clean and able to look into your heart at a glance. Howard Blackburn of Gloucester is a legend of the port. Stop anyone you see on the crowded Main Street and ask for him and there is not a soul but can tell you where he lives. He is a living monument of what every fisherman would like to be. "A tough one," they'll tell you, by which they do not mean he is rough or unkindly, but a man who has fought the sea and won.

Before he took to the sea he spent his winters in Nova Scotian lumber camps. That is where he got that huge frame. Schools couldn't hold him; even as a youngster he longed for activity. He took part in the spring drives, rafting lumber down to the sea. By the time he was of age he had six years' sea service to his credit, and as many other men have done, he came at last to Gloucester, to the Gloucester that has never given him up. Men do not drift to this town for a soft life. The fisheries use the best. Blackburn had come to the one town where his agility and physical power could pay its best premium. He went fishing.

He went down to port Medway, his home, for a visit, and a Gloucesterman put in minus a man. She was the *Grace L. Fears*

bound on a fresh halibut voyage. She was well captained, well iced, fresh baited and in good trim. When she sailed with flag flying for Burgeo Banks, Howard Blackburn went with her. Once on the banks she set her trawls quickly, and then, the captain fearing snow, put over her eight dories. The wind was southeast, but presently drew northwest and put the dories to leeward of the schooner. They took their catch, got up their trawls and looked for the vanished schooner. The snow had turned from squalls to a blinding blizzard. There was nothing else to do so they rowed for two hours and lost distance. Blackburn and his dory mate anchored, waiting for it to clear. The snow stopped at dark. It was black, with a bitter wind, when they spied the schooner's riding light. She burned a flare from time to time, calling the dories home. Welch and Blackburn got out their oars again to pull aboard. The sea was a roaring cauldron by then, a turmoil of seething wind crests, short and dangerously steep. They buckled down to the pull, but the light came no nearer. There was nothing to do but anchor. It was breezing to a gale. The anchor dragged and the schooner light disappeared. They looked after it in silence. Each man knew what that meant. The spray was flying in horizontal sheets and freezing. Every hour of the dark brought more cold. January, adrift in a Nova Scotian gale—and at daylight no schooner in sight, only a maddened sea and a tormented dory! The trawls were thrown over to lighten the boat, and the halibut, all but one fish saved against the end of what promised to be a tragedy. There was nothing new in the loss of a dory. In those days if half a dozen smacks came home to Gloucester there was sure to be one with its flag at half-mast, silent acknowledgment of the sea's toll. Both the men realized their plight. The dory rode drier after the lightening.



The cold gained. It froze the spray where it flew across them in sheets. Now and then a crest swept them. At first they had only to bail at times. Soon they were bailing steadily to keep afloat. There was no food and no water. Land lay to the eastward. There was no longer anything to be hoped from the smack. The two dorymen got out their oars and ran off before the roaring sea, but the crests sharpened. Soon, one boarded them and stripped them of an oar. They did not dare run before the wind longer. Watching their chance, they brought her head to the wind. Welch held her there with the oars, while Blackburn kicked in the head of one of the trawl buoys which they had saved. With that and an iron winch handle he rigged a kind of drogue.

Ice was everywhere. It made on the dory. The painter was sheathed in it. The men's oilers were weighed down by it. Blackburn had trouble making the knots in the frozen gear. He took off his mittens to go at it bare handed. The mittens fell into the bottom of the dory and as he launched the sea anchor Welch quit rowing and fell to bailing. The mittens went overboard almost at the first dip mixed with window-light ice and sea slop. Blackburn's hands began to freeze. They turned white and stiffened. He had little feeling in them. There was nothing to do. Then he showed his manhood. He got out the oars and set his hands upon them. The sinews cracked. It was hard to clamp the fingers about the oars. What feeling there was in them was a numb pain. In a half hour of torment his fingers were frozen to the shape of a rower's hands. Then he took the oars in again satisfied to know that he could row by slipping the frozen hands over the oar ends, if the chance came. He joined Welch in the mad business of bailing to keep alive. His hands

had no protective feeling. He bashed them badly at the bailing and scarcely knew it. A pitching dory, loggy under a burden of ice, is a hard place to be careful. They had dragged out the first night and the first day; they were still alive, but in a bad way.

Welch was young. He had perhaps never had the toughening of lumber camp life, nor six years in deep water trade. All day he said, "Keep up your courage, we'll soon be picked up." The frost bit him to the bone. He had been talking to keep up his own heart. He was the more sensitive of the two and he had not Blackburn's dogged will to live. When dark came he no longer rose to bail, but lay in the bow of the dory. Soon he could not see. There was no shelter for either of them. "We can't live until morning," he said. His mind deadened by the roar of the wind and water, he had given up hope when daylight failed. He died that night. Blackburn had taken off his stockings to cover his ruined hands. When Welch had been dead some time he lifted him out of the bow into the stern. It was no easy matter in a crazy, teetering dory. He took the dead man's mittens. His own feet, naked in his boots, were freezing, but all night he bailed and broke ice from the dory.

The second night passed. By morning the gale died. At light Blackburn took the loom of an oar and began systematically to clear the dory of its ice sheath, pounding it off in great flakes. That finished, he took in his drogue and began to row toward land. It was amazing he was able to think so clearly. A lesser man would have still hoped for rescue; Blackburn accepted the task as a single-handed job.

It was when he began to row that he realized how badly off his hands really were. All day he rowed, without food or water, facing the frozen corpse of his dory mate. The chicken halibut, a

twenty pound fish, lay in the bottom of the dory. Blackburn knew he might be glad to eat that frozen fish, but was not yet hungry enough. He pulled all day, his hands swelled into two great masses of flesh. Fortunately there was little feeling in them. At nightfall he made out the dim hills of Newfoundland. He brushed his eyes to make sure. The hills were there, very far away, but still there. He was afraid to row longer for he was very clumsy with the oars. An oar lost in the night might mean the end. He took them in wearily and put his drogue over again. The dory drifted until morning.

Blackburn dared not sleep for fear of freezing. The wind came on icy as breath of a berg, a keen, whistling wind, but not so great as to make the boat take water. Back to the wind, he settled himself upon the bottom of the dory with his arms over the thwart. Rocking fore and aft, he kept the blood moving, hour after hour. It was a terrible night, worse in its way than the rest, for his vitality was lower. Darkness dragging to darkness, and overhead the pitiless clarity of blazing stars. He was very near the end of his rope, he must come to an idle anchor at last, but at dark he had seen land. He would wait.

The sun rose clear. He was already rowing then. The dory seemed closer to land. Perhaps a merciful current had helped him. He rowed in toward a rocky, pitiless coast. There was no break visible until he reached well in, then he saw a house which, even to his eyes at that distance, was uninhabited. If no help were to be gotten there at least he could find shelter. Landing, he secured the dory as well as he could, and going into the hut he dumped the snow off a plank bed, and by turning the planks over got a dry bed, where, under an old fish net, he took his first sleep since leaving the *Grace L. Fears*. In the morning he found

his dory broken and half filled by water. He lifted the body of Welch out, but it slipped from him into the water twelve feet deep. Then he hauled the dory up, and when the water ran out through the plug hole, put the plug back in her, salvaged his oars from among the slush ice where they had been washed, but had fortunately been caught, and rowed up an arm of water that opened before him.

Luck played him sadly to the end of that voyage. He saw a schooner outward bound, but could not catch up with her. He had the choice between entering the river or rounding a cape to eastward. He was light-headed by then and shaken by hunger. Even his strength had a limit, so he rowed up the river toward a small cluster of houses. If he had rounded the cape to the east instead, he would have come upon the port of Cape La Hune. There was a community of some prosperity, with a doctor, and the possibility of good medical attention. Instead he rowed on into Little River where there was little or no food. Some good people took him in, a needy family named Litchman. It was the end of his voyage, and came close to being the end of all voyages for him.

While some of the men went back to get the body of Welch, which was Blackburn's last care for some time, they put the badly frozen man into a brine bath to draw the frost from his hands and feet. Thus began days of agony. The man who had beaten the sea passed into a time of terrible pain. The bath was followed by poultices of flour and cod liver oil. Blackburn was by then a weakling, sick unto death. He lay for weeks, and the Litchmans did for him as for their own, sharing their all, small as it was. It was a hard winter. He heard children crying with hunger in that humble little house, and could do nothing about it. Dry

gangrene set in. He lost his fingers, his toes, and part of his right heel, and through all the horror the Litchmans tended him gently, fighting for his life. They were very poor. There was no stove in the house, no lamp, nor any clock. There was a rough table, a few benches and an open fireplace. They kept him warm under quilts and old sails, and they saved him.

At last he got about, a wreck of his former self. He had saved only the stumps of his thumbs. A maimed giant he at last went back to Gloucester. There the people marvelled at him. They collected five hundred dollars, every cent of it wrung from the sea, and set him up as a tobacconist. He opened a bar where Gloucestermen could get an honest glass of beer or the fire of good liquor. It was a terrible time for him. The handling of anything in his poor hands was painful. He had to learn to make change and keep accounts. Of all men he was least fitted to keep shop, but he fought out his battle, and soon he had back the little fund the citizens had given him. He tried to give it back but they would not hear of it, so he gave it all to the Fishermen's Widows and Orphans Fund, that others might have it as a bulwark against the harm the sea has always brought to Gloucester.

His little place on Main Street thrived. Men admire a man, and Blackburn's courage was good to the eyes of more fortunate ones. All sorts came to drink and talk. When a man needed help he was all heart. He gave fully to all of his modest earnings. Stories came to the little place and men looked upon it as a centre of their lives, a place to think of when hauling heavy trawls, to race to when the tanker was full to the hatches and flying for home.

Blackburn was not through voyaging. Most men in his state would have settled thankfully into the rut of a shopkeeper. Oh,



he was grateful enough for all they had done for him, but the sea was just behind his shop. He heard of the Klondike, so he set out to try his fortunes and came home with a bashed knee, came home on crutches and stayed just long enough to be free of them. Then he began his real voyaging.

He was none too sure of himself in his next venture. By nature a modest man, he weighed it carefully. He had the idea of sailing a small boat from Gloucester, Massachusetts to Gloucester, England. He wanted to be on the sea. He wanted freedom and action. He ached for it. So he built himself the *Great Western*. He had enough of working with others on the Klondike expedition. If he could handle her he would sail alone. People thought he was crazy. How could a man with stumps for hands make and reef sail, or cook, or do the work about deck on such a voyage? It was hard at first and it never became easy, but he managed as he said himself, "Better than he had hoped."

The *Great Western* was a fishing sloop in design, thirty feet over all with a beam of eight and a half feet. She drew four feet four inches. Her house was low and protected, fisherman fashion, by a sturdy rail. She carried a clipper bow. The main-sail was low and broad in the fashion of the day and carried two reef bands. Her ballast was all inside, pig iron stowed low. She steered with a wheel, American fashion. It was a long business getting ready for the cruise. It is amazing the dunnage that goes into a little ship for such a voyage. Blackburn knew there would be little time or energy to stow anew the lading, so he worked methodically at it before sailing.

On June 18, 1899, he sailed. It was Sunday, a pet day with fishermen, sure to bring good luck. Boats of the East Gloucester Yacht Club sailed with him. More than half the

townsfolk lined the water-front. The escort of honor stood out beyond Eastern Point, then with many a farewell shout, turned back. There was nothing sombre about the sailing. Gloucester believed in Blackburn. The *Great Western* was well found. She carried chronometer, sextant and a patent log. This last Blackburn used much as ships once used the chip log. He turned the spinner for an hour or two at a time, and having gained an idea of the speed of his boat, he unshipped it and used what he had learned in his dead reckoning, thereby sparing his log.

The first night he ran into a calm and dared not sleep for fear he might find himself ashore on Cape Ann. After that he sailed on a routine. At six in the evening he took the wheel and sailed her until noon next day. Then he would cook his dinner, preparing enough to last over his long watch, and turned in to sleep, resuming his watch at six. The *Great Western* would not sail herself close hauled, so for six of the twenty-four hours she had to be hove to. When there was no wind he slept as much as he could. This system soon wore him down. He had trouble with his right leg, probably an infection of some sort, and a bout of fever. He stood it until he was well to the eastward of the Grand Banks, when, feeling that he was getting off the steamer track and had less risk of being run down, he hove the boat to at night and slept until dawn. For this purpose he lowered the mainsail, set the storm trysail and lashed the wheel. Under this rig she was safe and made steady headway with all hands asleep if the wind were a point or two free. Naturally, in his condition, he avoided reefing as long as possible. Using his back and arms as levers and his hands only to keep what he gained, it was much easier to hoist and lower sails than to reef. It was of course impossible for him to have the control of lesser matters that a man

with serviceable hands might have had. For instance, one rough evening, the port light slipped from his grip in setting it and went by the board. After that he ran under white and green lights.

One night, "with the wheelbox on the lookout," he awoke to hear the hoarse roar of a steamer's whistle so close that he sprang for the deck on the run. He thought the sloop had run into fog while he slept, so he carried his fog horn up with him. The weather was still good, the stars friendly, the sea smooth. A big steamer towered beside him, her engines stopped. A brief interview followed. It consisted of two speeches. An officer hailed from the bridge to know if assistance were needed.

"No, I'm all right."

Not a word more. Blackburn looked at the steamer. The officer looked down at him. The water turned white under the steamer's stern at the kick of the screw. She slid away over the black sea. The only other attention the giant paid was to sound three short blasts by way of salute to audacity. It was a seamanly meeting with no foppery on either side. In a few minutes Blackburn was alone.

He had learned something. When he had hailed the bridge of the steamer, he did not like the sound of his own voice. He took to thinking about that. His words had seemed hollow and strained. It had not been the hearty voice of Blackburn of Main Street greeting sombre men in from the sea for comfort and fellowship. He decided that a man alone would never use his voice. Was he getting queer? That wouldn't do. England was a long way off. So he mended his ways. He was not a poet to whom words came easily, he was a seaman. He had to have an excuse for speech. After that when there was any work about deck, he gave the orders cheerily and then turned to, obey-

ing his own commands. After all a man talking to himself does no harm. It is good to talk to a sensible man, and it is good to hear a sensible man talk. Blackburn had thought his way out.

The wind turned east, making it necessary to steer long watches. The sloop should have met variable winds at that season of the year. East, east always. Blackburn changed his mind about his sloop. He had gotten the hang of her by then, learned her balance, could trim her so that she could make considerable headway even close hauled. That eased the watches.

He was not done with running lights yet. The starboard light would not burn. He wasted patience upon it. Then he flung it overboard and hoisted an honest fisherman lantern. From then on he sailed with two white lanterns set in the shrouds. The easterly wind blew harder. The sloop climbed and careened, picking her way through a breaking sea. He was kept pretty busy.

Then came a night of rain, sweeping the sloop in sheets, rattling spitefully off the sails. Blackburn had set his two white lights as usual and was below cooking his meal. He had had his trouble keeping his saucepan of beef stew upon the oil stove. Suddenly he heard the hiss of escaping steam close aboard. He rushed on deck, blinded in the dark after the warmth and light of the cabin. First he could see the white mast head lights, then as his eyes cleared, the red and green lights of a steamer bearing straight upon the sloop. It looked like the end. Slowly, terribly slowly, the way fell off the visitor. Blackburn went forward and stood under his lights so the steamer's people could see him. This time there were no words. The sloop forged ahead making good her course across the other's bow. Then the liner, slowly work-

ing clear, churned her way westward. Blackburn went below to his hot meal meditating upon the disconcerting ways of steamers. He was in no humor for company.

Some of the passing captains were the soul of courtesy. There was for instance, the eastbound *Carlton*, a Newcastle vessel. When the *Great Western* was thirty-eight days out she ranged alongside and an officer stood ready to give any possible assistance. The Gloucesterman said he needed nothing but his longitude. The weather had been bad and he had had no observation for eight days.

"I haven't worked up my sights yet, but I'll let you know in a few minutes."

The speed of the steamer carried him past then, and Blackburn wondered how that would do any good. She would be miles away before they had the position, but he had not counted on his cheery officer. The fellow disappeared into the chart house and the steamer swung in a huge circle. This carried her astern, but she came alongside again, the officer shouted down the position from the bridge, and with a wave of the hand passed on into a blur of smoke. Blackburn appreciated the attention, but felt ashamed of so interfering with the traffic of the sea. He determined to ask no more favors of well-intentioned steamers. He would not make himself a nuisance to any.

It was not always possible to cook on the *Great Western*. When the weather was heavy he stirred two or three teaspoons of oatmeal into cold water. On this he sailed from morning till eight in the evening. Then, after snugging down the boat for the night, he had a meal of smoked fish and canned goods, washed down with a drink of water. This to quiet his stomach before turning in. In bad weather he fled from the steamer track, but in



fine weather he made toward it, glad to see four or five ships a day. It was companionship of a sort.

Soon he was meeting ships bound on all courses. He knew he was getting close to England. He kept a better lookout then and on the morning of August 16 he made the Scilly Islands, fifty-nine days out and began to work up the Bristol Channel. Sail was kept on her then, all that she would carry. Dalliance was out of order, he wanted to get in. A fine run up channel, a falling in with pilots, and he landed at Portes Head where he sent a cablegram to Commodore McCurdy of the East Gloucester Yacht Club, announcing his arrival in England. The British press awoke. Blackburn was close upon his triumph.

Sailing up to Sharpness he found the dock captain had set the signal "Welcome to Gloucester." The *Great Western* made a pleasant picture under full sail slipping up the Severn. She flew two flags, an American ensign, flown fisherman fashion at the masthead and a silk pennant at the main peak given him by members of the East Gloucester Yacht Club.

The ensign was the gift of the Portuguese of Gloucester. A nice old world touch, that. The imagination of his Portuguese friends, sending back to the old world the flag of their adopted country. Worthwhile people these. The same flare that gave that ensign to Blackburn has built the hilltop church of Our Lady of Good Voyages. It is a replica of a church in the Azores. From between the towers a beautifully painted madonna looks down upon the harbor. In her arms she cradles a boat instead of the babe, and once a week at sunset, a carillon of bells sends music forth to the sea from the towers, a tribute to the waters from which all this had risen. It is as important to them as Notre Dame de la Garde is to the seamen of Marseilles, and it is as poetic as that

ensign sent back to England in the keeping of the Prince of Gloucestermen.

Gloucester, England, lived up to its British standards. Blackburn's Gloucester was a hard bitten little town with the menace of the sea always on its threshold. Every dollar that came into it had upon it the risk of life and limb. Brown rock, clear water, but hard, hard living. Gloucester England was old. It appreciated the taste of Blackburn in his bringing of good will. He was face to face with new attitudes toward life. He was passed through customs with a smile. He paid no dock dues. He was towed free of charge. As he passed through drawbridges husky voices cheered and rained banter of good-natured sort upon him. Like Odysseus home from his wandering he sat astride his wheel box while the women pelted him with flowers, for it was rose time in England. When he came to rest he met the town crier out ahead of a procession, his bell clanging and his face sober as a judge gone mad. The Mayor came down in his robes and chain and the Sheriff with him, while behind loitered all the lesser gentlemen of the town in solemn parade. The crier announced the purpose of the ceremony in no uncertain words, which was a good thing, for it made Blackburn's position very clear to him. A sailor ashore can never be very sure of his reception. He is an alien in all lands, even his own. This reception was more than a plain spoken fisherman could possibly expect and the lone voyager was glad to find it was friendly in intent and a tribute to his courage. He fell in between the Mayor and Sheriff, and relying upon his natural dignity, took the town by storm. When it was over he sailed half-way round England to reach London. His fame had flown before him and, as the rural press is so fond of saying, a good time was had by all. There he sold

the *Great Western* and returned by steamer to his own Gloucester.

There his townsfolk made much of him in a very different way. He was a bit of a hero, a bit more than he felt he deserved. It was all right for Englishmen to take their own slant toward the affair, but fisher folk should know better. He had leisurely sailed across the ocean, that was all. Why all the fuss? He refused to take his honors seriously. His sense of proportion was too sound for that. He was even dissatisfied with his performance. He had loitered on the way. The passage could be done more quickly. Well, why not do it? Good. He would.

The *Great Western* had been a good boat but she was a little heavy, a little large. Blackburn had been able to handle her, but if she had been smaller she would have been just as able, and he would have dared carry on when frequently he had hove to. He resolved to do it again and in a smaller boat. This time he would try for speed, carrying sail Gloucester fashion.

The new boat he named the *Great Republic*. She was twenty-five feet over all, with seven feet beam and drawing three feet of water. Archibald Fenton of East Gloucester built her in the winter of 1901. That boat is still afloat. The yellow pine in her has kept as well as the oak. Her frames are double and sprung to shape. Below the water line she is planked with yellow pine, and above with white cedar. She had a black iron rudder post and a wooden well. She was built with a long, sharp entrance, and a very full hull abaft the midsection. Modern practice would condemn her lines but she was built for a purpose and Blackburn knew what he wanted. She had to be able; she was and is. Comfort did not matter so long as she would live and sail. At first she carried an iron keel, but Blackburn felt she was slow with it,

so he took the ballast inboard, chunks of cast iron under the floor, fisherman fashion, and liked her better.

He gave her a pole mast, instead of a lower and topmast, and a generous bowsprit. Her mainsail was large and with a purpose. He intended to drive this boat. When he sailed her he would make her carry that big sail and when she had to sail herself he could set the storm trysail and a reefed jib, when she could hold her course better than the *Great Western* had been able to do. This voyage was to be no idle sauntering across the sea. He was out for a record.

On the first of January, 1901, Blackburn issued a challenge to sail any man in America single handed from Gloucester to Lisbon, Portugal. He posted a forfeit with the East Gloucester Yacht Club. The press took it up. Acceptances came in, acceptances without forfeits posted. Time dragged on. Many of those who were willing to try fell by the way. The queerest of all was a catamaran of three cigar-shaped rubber tubes. The creator of this freak talked of passing perhaps two months on a raft with high confidence, but it ended there. It was all talk. Not a single competitor came forward. The *Great Republic* was gotten ready with all despatch. Under full rig she proved to be a ghoster in light airs. Reefed, she handled better and under storm rig she would look after herself. Blackburn watched her building with keen eye. Every day's work gave him more confidence in her. She was a great little ship. Her decks offered nothing for the sea to ravage. Her trunk was very low and the tiny cockpit just fitted to a man so large as Blackburn. There would be less work on her than on the *Great Western*. He stocked her well, fastened her oil cook stove so it could not go adrift, laid in fuel for the cooking, and saw to it that his bunk was neither too large nor

too small, but just right for him to stay in regardless of weather. Canned corn beef, beans, peas, lobster, salmon he dumped aboard. He had special lockers for his hard bread, butter, tea and coffee. Down on the keel he fastened a fifty gallon tank for fresh water. It would help there as ballast.

June came before he had all the gear ready. He had fixed upon the ninth as his sailing day. Not one of the competitors ever entered Gloucester Harbor. The Yacht Club waited until the last minute, but Blackburn was going anyway. He wanted to see how it would be to race against time across the Atlantic. If huge liners could concern themselves with cutting down their records, why should not a single-hander do the same? He would keep her going on this passage. No heaving to even if he lost canvas. She must be going always.

The sailing day was fair with a good breeze. The start was made with reefed mainsail at two in the afternoon. Almost at once he shook out the reef and went to it with a whole sail and a jib topsail, storming along on the starboard tack, the flotilla of boats gathered to see him off having all they could do to keep up with him. They turned back off Eastern Point. At night he turned to at stowing his dunnage. Things were a mess below decks, for departures are always sudden, and everything had to be put where it could be found. It was an all night job in a lurching sea. He sailed under two white lights, which were really for him a distinguishing signal now. Ships that had met him on his former voyage would know him at a glance by them. Early next morning he was in the track of the coasters that in summer make a course from Nantucket Shoals to Maine ports or the Provinces.

By the twelfth he was on the northeast end of Georges Bank. For a round of the sun there was no wind. Five fishing smacks



lay about him, their gear rattling to the roll of the swell. So was lost a precious day. The shoals of George was no place to dawdle. If a stiff easterly breezed in the *Great Republic* might easily join the many good ships that had gone down. "The graveyard of Cape Ann," that was Georges Bank. Blackburn was anxious to be gone instead of idling with nothing to listen to but the slatting of the sloop's rig while the savage tide swept her where it would.

At last the wind came, a southwest cap-full that grew and grew. The *Great Republic* bowled along with her main boom well off on her port quarter and all sails ramped full. She bid good-bye to the bankers. She took a bone in her teeth and left a sweet, clean wake boiling astern. She was free again, happy in the lift and rush. Blackburn had endured thirty-seven hours of anxious watching, but he could not leave the magic of running down the wind. From hour to hour he intended to snug down, but the lifting deck under him was too good after the flat calm. The wind piped, singing through the rigging. The sea was sharp and high. Blackburn watched his chance. He dared run no longer. The sloop was rooting dangerously. He set his storm trysail, luffed up, spun the wheel hard down and brought to, getting the sail off her as fast as he could. There she lay close to the wind riding the breaking crests like a gull, "with its head under its wing." He set his two white lights and watched for a time, proud of her, and when he was sure she would make out he went below to get a wink of sleep wedged in his bunk.

All next day the wind held, the *Great Republic* lying hove to and sharply heeled by the pressure of the storm trysail. Late in the day she got under way, reefed short, but the wind was ahead and every sough of her forefoot buried Blackburn in drenching

spray. It was no lark that, sailing close hauled in mid-ocean, yet this breeze was but a short summer blow, soon ended, but well weathered while it blew. It had done no harm but to try the big man's patience and force him to polish off the last of the food his wife had sent with him ready cooked.

He kept out of the Gulf Stream, working steadily to the eastward. Steamers bent on rescuing him came along every little while. Their men looked down on the sloop expecting to see the owner rush on deck begging to be taken off. But of course they were mistaken. The cool candor of Blackburn looking up at the visitors, as if curious to know why they came so close, sent at least one liner scuttling off about her business as if shamefaced at her curiosity.

On the seventeenth of June Blackburn passed a ship close enough to read her name. She was the *Norge*. He could not much longer keep clear of the Gulf Stream for signs of its nearness were many. Portuguese-men-o'-war sailed past, three sharks followed him for a time. The wind was shifty, changing almost hourly. A breeze would set in, brisk and fair. Blackburn would smile and order himself to make the most of it. In half an hour there would be nothing but the eternal sea circle and a lump of sea running. From a determination to drive her the skipper could turn to a square meal of fried pork, canned salmon and onions, bread, butter and tea. Perhaps, before he could create a reality out of his dream, the wind would be down upon him again, and possibly from a bad quarter. The sea was frequently rough to make the waiting through a lull all the more uncomfortable. Just before dark one evening the steamer *Shenandoah* drew close to ask if he were the man who had formerly sailed to England. There was some little bobbing of heads and deep-voiced talk after

that. Apparently there had been an argument on the steamer about the *Great Republic*.

"What can we do for you?"

"Send me some wind," said Blackburn, at which they laughed and wished him a good voyage.

That wind came. In a day the *Great Republic* was being flung about in a nasty cross sea, beating to the eastward, burying herself in breaking water, a crazy, lurching bit of boat. The horizon was saw-toothed when it could be seen. The Gulf Stream, for he was in it at last, the Gulf Stream current was fighting the wind. The sea was short and crazy. It was heavy slogging, a battle for time and the *Great Republic* doing its best.

It was then that the Howard Blackburn of earlier years, the man of the Burgeo Banks settled to work. The passage so far had been a torment. Rough weather, changeable winds, a broken steering gear, all were in the past. He had a chance. He'd show her. Even so early in his driving he did not dare open the hatch to the cabin except to wind the chronometer and grab a bite of food to be eaten on deck. He sailed her, oh how he sailed her, and she ate to windward with the courage a good boat can have. For thirty-seven hours he drove her and then he hove her to under the storm trysail, and tumbled below to get food and sleep, followed into his cabin through the opened slide by the best portion of a boarding sea.

In the morning, one of the eternal steamers came down and whistled for Blackburn to come on deck. She was in ballast and rolling deck to, none too comforting to look at. Blackburn waved to her in salute. She came down as close as she dared.

"Do you want to be taken off?"

"No thank you."

They stood by, no doubt talking over the desperate plight of the little sloop.

It was then that the devil of recklessness came upon Blackburn, that devil that leads men to mock both life and death by daring. It came to him like a flash. Standing by to pick him up, were they? He'd show them a thing Gloucester style. Understand, it was no morning to break a sail out of stops, for anything. For the love of it Blackburn hauled away on the storm trysail, set the reefed jib and kept her off on an east-southeast course. For twenty minutes the steamer wallowed after. Then she saluted with three whistles and was off on her own way, marvelling at the ways of lone sailormen who were crazy enough to ride their decks on a day when God should pity a man at sea, and him in ten thousand tons of steel.

Blackburn turned his bravado to account. The *Great Republic* stood the gaff. She forged ahead through the broken water and did herself no damage. All day and all night man and boat fought. The Gulf Stream could be crossed by driving? Well, give it to her. Steady, but no need to let her up. If driving were necessary, then drive he would.

On July 4 he made the islands of Flores and Corvo of the Azores. By then the wind had fallen light and he loitered again, drifting past, taking all night to bid them good-bye. Another spell of shifting winds and squalls had to be suffered. For a man who had left Gloucester boasting of his intention of cutting time from his former passage and establishing a record for lone sailors, Blackburn felt he was a sorry figure. When he figured it out he had made the Azores in twenty-five days. It annoyed him to meet still the changeable weather. He wore out his gear and his patience torturing his vessel. Now he reefed, now he shook

out, now the deck was too hot to be bearable, now he looked up under the stars wondering when he could get on.

At last it broke, that baffling weather, broke in a northeast gale. Blackburn was coldly mad then, possessed by the delusion of triumph if possible. He tied in the reefs in his jib, he set his storm trysail and settled to his grind. Across grey, spume-ridden days, he drove, through nights filled with bedlam and the shrill wind shriek, when even his binnacle light could not be kept burning. He had no sun to observe and no chance to do so if there had been any. For four, for five days, he stayed perched by the wheel box. All below was drenched from the driving in of the water. The sails were wet to the truck. The *Great Republic* lay upon her side, her rail under. She soused down into a boarding sea perilously. All the time Blackburn could have sung for joy, but his eye was quick and his judgment careful. He was on his own. The despondency of the days of waiting had gone. When he reviewed the facts he knew that if he could carry this good slant close to the coast he would have a real record, a passage worth remembering. For sixty-two hours he stood his watch by his sloop, and she tearing along for Portugal.

July 16 the wind fell off. Blackburn had but an imperfect knowledge of his position, he was anxious. It was not so bad to play the driving mad man at sea with a well-tested little ship, but to crash her into a stranding through ignorance, that was at variance with every thought of a seaman. The coast must be close, that he knew. He was glad to feel the sloop sag back like a tired horse settling to a trot. She was a smart thing and he knew her now, but Portugal lay somewhere ahead. Perhaps the morning would be clear and he might get a sight.

The morning brought him a glimpse of Cape Espechel.



Cheerio, how he smiled at that! What a landfall was there! He had come three thousand miles to find Lisbon. For days he had staggered along, guessing his way, reeling over a strange sea to an unknown landfall and when morning came he had missed his destination by only fifteen miles. A short run toward the north brought him to the mouth of the Tagus. He had made the run in thirty-eight days. No wonder was it that he felt he could have beaten any man in the world in her. He had driven her, and driven her, and she had fought her way over and was unhurt by it. He would take her up to the town as soon as he could get a pilot. Gently, that was the way with her now, gently, where before all had been working her up without a dash of mercy. Ah yes, they are right in Gloucester. Blackburn was the tough one and wise too.

A fisherman was taken for pilot from a boat working off Tagus mouth. He had no English, but it was wonderful what a Latin can understand when he will. Blackburn laid out some salt pork, hard bread, tobacco and canned goods. He waved at them with an open-handed gesture. The fisherman smiled and proceeded to take him in to Lisbon. He could not steer with a wheel, having never seen anything but a tiller. He jibed the boat willy nilly, and before he got the knack of it the tide turned against them running out of the river mouth strongly. The pilot wanted to anchor, but Blackburn doubted they could get anchor and chain in again in that great depth of water. He let the tide do its worst, and leaving the deck in charge of the incapable pilot, he went down, put the water-soaked cabin to rights, scrubbed the floors and lockers, making everything neat and proper. Then he shaved and put on his shore clothes.

When the tide turned they took the boat up the Tagus, the

American flag at the peak. The *St. Mary*, that famous old school ship, lay in the harbor flying her ensign. It was a breath of home to Blackburn coming in as he was to a strange people, where he understood no word, no way of the land.

He sailed up past the tower of Belem. It was there Vasco de Gama had once unfolded his proud standard, "that royal flag of white damask with Christ's cross in crimson satin embroidered with gold," a flag proud enough to please even the new Viceroy of India, sailing as he was, and the young Magellan with him. A proud port, Lisbon, spread out upon the low hills: steep streets, the buildings climbing one above the other, terrace above terrace, as beautiful a spot from the sea as Naples. Above the town, the Tagus River spreads into a broad pool, quiet harborage and good. Coming up on the tide Blackburn edged into the quays that lined the river. For the first time in a month he heard the bustle of a town, the clatter from the cobbled streets, the shouts of hawkers, saw the innumerable fountains beyond the grey green water of the roadstead.

He had succeeded a second time. He docked at two in the afternoon, just thirty-nine days from Gloucester. Thomas Fleming Day took thirty-three to make a passage from Providence to Gibraltar and he had Thurber and Goodwin to help him. The *Great Republic* had been sailed single handed.

Blackburn dismantled his boat at Lisbon and shipped her home. When he had seen Portugal he went up through France and England and sailed for New York in the liner *Columbus*. He liked the ship and her name. Gloucester was glad to see him and said so. He tied up the *Great Republic* behind his place on Main Street. He was not at home to stay; he has been cruising off and on ever since, once the whole length of the United States,

for the habit of mind that takes a man across the Atlantic twice lives as long as the man.

I went to see Blackburn at Thanksgiving time. It was cold in Gloucester, and as I loafed along the fish docks I asked for him.

"Afraid he's off on a cruise," said a fisherman. "He's got a new boat you know."

So I went up to his place on Main Street afraid I'd travelled five hundred miles for nothing. Fortune was with me. He'd be in in a few minutes. He had to go down to the dock every day, but the cold wind drove him home soon, if I'd wait. He couldn't stand the cold as he once did. And I, shivering, was not surprised, for it was bitter cold. He came serenely in at last, apparently as comfortable as on a summer day. I listened to a kind voice, fell under the spell of his natural, friendly manner and looking into his blue eyes knew that I would rather go to sea with him than any man I'd ever known. Blackburn is a single-hander. He has a new boat and who knows when the fit may come upon him to turn her nose seaward, for the poise, the stalwart determination of the man is still there. Time is a jade and devious, but one would think Blackburn might yet go roving, and if you asked them what would Gloucestermen say? Shake their heads, smile and say a little shyly to the stranger, "Blackburn? Wait. Who can tell?" He is one with the great simplicity of his people. His courage, who can sound it?



 NOW CRUISING IS MORE  
THAN A SPORT; IT IS A MEANS OF TRAVEL, A  
MANNER OF LIVING, AN ATTITUDE TOWARD LIFE

—*Hildebrand*





---

X: HE SEWED, AND SEWED, AND SEWED:  
*Alain Gerbault*

☆☆☆ ALAIN GERBAULT WAS FREE. HE COULD NOT BELIEVE IN his good fortune. He took off his cap and let the wind play through his blonde hair. He looked down at his kit bag. His blue eyes were sombre. He had lived through. There would be no more need to go zooming into the clouds. No more fearful days dealing with death, strapped to his place, soaring away into the blue with his squadron, all good men of the Thirty-first. Deafened by the roar of the engines, tossed about in the bumpy air, dodging puffs of shrapnel, white smoke rings bursting all about, there was excitement enough even for Gerbault. His best friends had died one by one, gotten by the Boche. He too would have gone, but the war ended in time. *Pour la belle France!* Ah to think of it—all over. After the drab touch of schooling it had been fair enough. Excitement, the sense of doing things both proud and difficult, the game of tag with death, the need to live peaceably with droves of men that other droves might be successfully murdered, the blindness of far off authority—a queer time surely. It was over. Alain Gerbault was free. Youth pulsed still in his blood; restlessness tugged like a spell upon his nerves, making him a tormented spirit, with strong, eager hands. What could he fashion of his liberty?

Alone, he saw himself on the pavements of Paris. Teeming life would be there, life like that of the barracks. Faces, thousands of them, hands fluttering in gesture. He would be looking for the dead, and never find them. He would be caught in a routine as deadly as that of the war and for no purpose. Why spend the new life in the ways of business? Why go back to engineering, struggling with problems of materials, figuring strains and stresses, running levels, adding to the great mass of human work. To live in a beehive, that was madness. Gerbault wanted none of it. He wanted to be himself. He was sick for solitude. He wanted to find himself, that self that had been submerged so long in the dirty business of war, and all his world offered him was business with no thought but profit. Who cared for profit? Life was the thing, life and freedom. It was short enough at the best. He knew how short now; the war had taught him that. Life should spell freedom, liberty for a man's bent and flare. That did not come out of the beehive of humanity, the cringing existence and the vapid, cynical laughter of a life of trade. It was worth nothing. Gerbault thought of it all with a shrug. Even a Frenchman's shrug is sometimes heavy with disappointment and restlessness.

He went back to his tennis. He was a ranking player, one of France's best. He gave himself up to his old love, but the exactness of the sport, the quick foot work, the well placed shot, the dazzling service, these did not quiet him. They belonged to some other era, to some far off youth out of which he had moved. The war had swallowed too many of the men he had known. Sadened, yet with his heart crying out for substantial comfort, the creed of sport left him cold. It was play, that was all, and his mind went on and on, seeking he knew not what. There were

times when his hands fell idle and his eyes took on a fire of torment. Life was slipping past and he was not making the most of its bubbles. His body could be tired, but his spirit, that was a wild, unmastered thing seeking expression, crying after peace. Everywhere were faces, words, bodies, all new, all strange. It was no use to shrug and say over and over, "C'est la guerre." This was no longer the war. This was life, this tortured search for new thoughts, new feelings. There were millions in a like mood, a generation thrown to the dogs of despair in their twenties. He had had enough of memories, he wanted to face the future. Not that he tired of the past, but it was filled with the haunting ideas of pain and loss, ghost things that rankled in the consciousness and rose like waves and hindered the carrying on of life, welling up between a man and action.

Waves! Yes, waves such as he had known in Dinard in his happy boyhood. Back there was nothing but pleasure. The grey bastions of St. Malo. The glory of a sunset over the roofs of the old walled town. Great men had gone out boldly from that ancient harbor. French fleets had lain at rest in the Rance under the guns of the fortress Solidor. Fleets! That was war. He thought of the fishers of Cancale beyond, farther out on the point. They went and came among the rocks of the channel, troubled only by the state of the tides and the catch of their boats. By day and night they carried on their plain, friendly lives. Gerbault thought of the waves of the bay lapping on the short, stern beaches. He thought of the quiet broken only by an old chant of the sea. Perhaps there lay peace. If he went back to the simplicity of youth all this hectic fire and blood might fade; he could be alone again. He heard the sea calling, the hollow rattle of boom and oar upon the gunwales, the low speech, the creak of

blocks. He saw the silent, gliding hulls coming and going over the waters of his youth. Strangers all, but peaceful, and calling to him through the silence. Then it was gone, that moment of the past, but it came again and again and would not be denied.

So Gerbault put away his tennis. That belonged with the war and the ways of the multitude. His companions were dead. He would go out alone then, sailing a boat. His future lay there. The muddle would straighten itself out once he had a good deck under him and time to put the world in its place. He began to travel the coast of France, hunting everywhere for his dream ship, talking to sea-going people, loitering in shipyards. A boat to please him was hard to find. The Mediterranean offered nothing. The Atlantic coast clear up into Normandy did no better. He drifted to England, hunting for a yacht on which to embark his hopes. There he met Ralph Stock who was war sick too, and finally at Southampton he stumbled upon the boat. His blue eyes lightened then. The intense energy of his long, lithe body went out toward her, like the projection of a spell of old magic. The beauty of her was a maddening thing that taunted her age, for she was not new. She was his even before the sale was completed, blood and bone of him, in a way no other yacht he had seen had ever been.

She was an English cutter, long and slim, of the breed our cousins over the water call a racing cruiser. Her decks had a clean sweep to the eye, broken only by two sky lights. Her counter was long, but her stem severely plumb. All her rigging was generous even to the long bowsprit. She was thirty-nine feet over all, on a water-line of thirty, and had a beam of eight and a half feet. She drew seven feet, had a generous free-board, plenty of forefoot and a goodly chunk of lead on her keel to help her



take a knockdown gracefully. In short she was the typical boat to come from the board of Dixon Kemp, fast, but with a moderate rig, and able despite her narrow beam. Her oak and teak had stood thirty-two years of life, but she was still sturdy, still the sea goer. She had a stateroom aft, then a saloon beautifully finished in mahogany and bird's eye maple, ruddy, golden wood that the hand stroked lovingly, and in the forecastle a galley. There was abundance of locker space. There was full head room, of course. She was fit to be a man's home and she was called the *Firecrest*.

Like a new religion she was put to a trial. Gerbault tested her out by taking her to southern France where he cruised for a year or two. To make sure of his grip on the new idea of things he played some tennis in those years, but only as a gesture apparently, for in the end he swung back to his cutter. He drove her from port to port along the Mediterranean, trying her every point until her ways were an open book to him and she fitted like an old shoe, well worn but comfortable. He was getting thinner and more tanned daily then, hard as nails, and skilled in the feel of his boat. The *Firecrest* was a handful for one man. Even so simple a matter as getting under way was a task, but she was worth it all.

Perhaps Gerbault had always intended to sail westward, beyond the pillars of Hercules. Maybe it came upon him subtly in those long months of learning his boat. He is not the man to shout his intentions from the masthead. None can tell where he found the sea lust, but one day he casually sailed out of Cannes on the Riviera.

It was a glorious morning. The *Firecrest* slipped out under the light breeze, just a slim yacht off for a day's sail. She passed the Chevalier's Tower, square and massive, with the old town at its

foot. The narrow loopholes gaped above the white-walled houses under their red roofs. She was carrying Gerbault from the tennis courts, from the palms, and flowers and fountains toward the drear sea stretches. The *Iles de Lérins*, *St. Honorat* and *Ste. Marguerite* shone blue and green on the horizon. A Greek pirate *Lero* gave the group his name and later the monks fastened their individual titles upon them, but the sun and the sea gave them their color. The sails filled to the freshened breeze and the cutter ramped away from the modest sea wall and pharos so fast that the land dropped down behind him and left the cutter and her man alone in good earnest, with a rising wind and a great sea running.

His first day ended in a squall that left him anxious, but when the wind came down from the mountains out of the northwest he took it for its word, set his square sail and romped away. In six days he was up with the Balearic Islands and the wind fell light. He had come upon them to the south of *Minorca* and fallen in with the coast of *Majorca*. Rugged beauty, that of those islands, snow-topped peaks lifting to the clouds and, upon the shoulders of the mountains, old villages that have seen the purple of Tyrian sails pass toward the Green Sea of Darkness, to bring back tin from the barbaric islands to the north and west of Gaul. And in time when they came no more, the rowers of Carthage beat the seas at the foot of the mountains to a creamy white, sweeping toward the Roman outpost *Saguntum*. Oh, a man of education had little need to be lonely sailing past the beauty of *Iviça* and *Formentera*, coming up with the Spanish coast. By the middle of May he saw the humped grandeur of *Gibraltar* rise above the sea rim and before night he had rounded *Europa Point* in sight of the governor's mansion, put *Windmill Hill* upon his starboard and

bore up for the mole of the naval harbor just in time to avoid the thrashing of an easterly gale.

Gibraltar was friendly within official bounds. The *Firecrest* was permitted to go up to the dockyard to be refitted and the work was done by government men. Gerbault finished his victualling there. He did not care for canned foods. The galley in the *Firecrest* was good. Her stoves were gimballed and her owner was sure he could cook on them. His supplies were much like conventional sailing ship fare. Salt beef, ship's biscuit, butter, jam, bacon, rice and potatoes were about all he stocked. For light he clung to kerosene lamps in gimbals and candles. The new master of the *Firecrest* worshipped the old sea ways. He had respect for the thirty-two years his ship had lived. The thousand years of tradition came to him from the sea like a breath of perfume, like the living wonder of a woman's hair into the glory of which he could thrust his face and dream. No man ever went to sea more reverently. So those who seek peace must live.

Before him stretched a long passage. Modestly he let a friend or two know his hope, but to the rest he was merely going on a long cruise. The prevailing winds of the North Atlantic are westerly. To cross directly would have meant many days of beating with the incidental wear upon gear, hull and master. He decided to take a southern route toward the Madeiras, south of the Sargasso Sea, south after fair winds and then across below Bermuda. Then he could turn north toward New York. Four thousand five hundred miles of track waited him. He was doing something new. No one had made a lone passage from east to west. There were no records to study, it was all to be learned by experience. That was the reason he provisioned for four months. No one could tell what lay ahead. A lesser man would have been

troubled at the prospect of being alone for so long, far from steamer tracks. An accident would have to be met alone, yet Gerbault looked forward to the experience. He was not frightened at the demands the incessant routine might make upon him. As he said later to John B. Kelly, "I like work." He was to have his fill of it.

He got away on June 6 bound south toward the trades, sunshine, and flying fish. By evening he dropped the height of Monoqui crowned by an old Moorish fort. He was really at sea. He hummed Breton songs and settled to his work.

The *Firecrest* was old. The second day out her patent roller gear gave way in reefing. Gerbault yielded gracefully. For the rest of the voyage he would have to lower the mainsail, roll it by hand and hoist away again. Well, he had wanted adventure. The mainsail began to rip at the seams. Every sail full of wind meant repairs, first the mainsail, then the jib, then the second jib. Even the gaff topsail would not hold together. He set a sail after a whole night's work on it, only to have it blow to rags in an instant. He was man enough to laugh at that. He had sought adventure—well this was adventure. On your way sailor, on your way.

In a few days he had worked down into his cask of salt beef far enough to find it had been topped off like a bogus crate of berries. On the top it was all good meat. Below it was a lot of bones and lumps of fat. The slack bilges of the *Firecrest* gave her a great roll, and she sailed so far on her side that it was almost impossible to keep anything on the stove despite the fact it was swung in gimbals. The tea and coffee took on a salt water taste. Sailors say tea and coffee become sea sick. Considering the antics of the *Firecrest* the idea has the savor of truth without shame to either

beverage. In the forecabin a man had to hold on with one hand while he stirred his porridge with the other. Still, what would you? On your way sailor.

Breakfast was a matter of oatmeal, fried bacon, biscuits, butter and sometimes jam. Not a French breakfast at all, but it was followed by twelve hours of steering. The days on deck were worth while, the poetry of the passage. Dinner at the end, a heavy meal of beef, rice and potatoes topped off the day's work. At night there were often sails to sew, or books to read, and then a blessed sleep while the *Firecrest* took care of herself. Every bout of rough weather brought repairs: a parted bobstay endangering the mast, chafed lines, torn canvas. Gerbault had plenty to do. It was a task just to hold the old cutter together.

The *Firecrest* under full rig did not sail herself very easily and the long twelve-hour vigils wore a man down. When Gerbault got into light winds he began to experiment with her, seeking a proper balance with which she might even run before the wind. At last, by hoisting the trysail in place of the main, and trimming the jib quite flat, she did well enough. If the wind in the trysail made her broach to the flattened jib filled and made her sag back upon her course. She was slower than when under full sail but she could sail a twenty-four hour day and Gerbault was free to work about deck and to get more rest.

He had caught the trades by then. The Portuguese-men-of-war fascinated him. He watched to see if they could really work to windward under their sail-like fins, tinted so delicately to a reddish purple. Old sailors claimed they could, that they capsized themselves in order to come about and take the breeze on the other tack. He decided they were very sensitive to the wind, but that they could not sail; only heave to and drift to leeward.



Three big fish followed him for a time, all a shimmer of deep blue and green. It is amazing how the clarity of off-shore water tints all with wondrous hues even to the opaque blue blackness of the greater depths. They were the dorado, the *Coryphenae hippuris*, splendid flashing brutes.

About one month out Gerbault found himself in a nightmare of genuine adventure. In the first place his water went bad. He had stored most of it in oaken casks which were not well seasoned and the water had turned red and had taken on an acid taste. To make him more unhappy, the wind fell light and the sun's heat was always stronger. Taking account of the distance to be done and the amount of water in his one galvanized tank he put himself on a ration of one tumbler of water a day. Next, the salt beef could not stand the heat and went bad. He heaved it overboard, wondering what would become of him. One morning he awoke to find his throat sore and swollen so badly he could not take solid food. Fever followed. Yet almost daily he had a new bout with rotten sails: new rips, old patches. If ever a man sewed his way across the Atlantic Gerbault was that man. Without a sextant he might have made it. Without a palm, needle, twine and endless work he would never have gotten really off the African coast. He was very slow at his work in those days. A fifteen foot seam in the mainsail meant twenty-four hours of labor. Physically he was in a sad way. Whenever the wind rose to half a gale something was bound to give way which meant work, work and more work. Things below deck got into a terrible mess for there was not time to clean up. Yet, light headed with fever, weak from liquid diet, weary from broken sleep, Gerbault carried on in the tradition of single-handers. A smaller boat would have been less work, but there would also have been less room in which

to live. The *Firecrest* was so big that she threatened to go to pieces faster than he could repair her. Bravely, he met each accident to the gear, feeling a grim joy at each obstacle overcome. One day he surrendered, and going below turned in, leaving the boat to do what it could, and she did well. The next, he was better. Then he basked in the blistering sun as the wind fell away to a calm. Rain squalls brought him a bath, but his fever returned and seemed worse than ever. The brilliant light became painful to his eyes. His joy in the cruise was very quiet then, more a dogged sense of pride at being able to survive at all costs than anything else.

Worn to a lank, brown, sea body, he had found the peace of the salt trade wind. In the long watches, often steering with his foot, while he sewed with both hands, the ghosts of dead days came before him, were met and went down. Things could be seen clearly from the midst of his ocean solitude. It was easy to judge fairly, to see life, even war life, in its parts as a picture unfolding before one. A sense of proportion—there lay peace and satisfaction, despite the threat of death in the sea stretches and the burden of endless work. The solitary vigil was balm to a thinking man, a tonic to the brave, but would have brought madness to many another not so sturdily moulded as the bold Gerbault.

Gradually he emerged from among his difficulties, partly by luck, partly by solving his riddle little by little. Flying fish fell upon his decks about the time his throat healed; the first fresh meat since he had left Gibraltar and that had been ages before. Dorados, great mackerel, loitered beneath the *Firecrest*. Gerbault, looking down through the water, thought them very tasty but very snobbish. When one broke water he shot at it but lost it. They turned up their noses at his baited hooks. As Captain

Slocum once said, "A man's life is none too long to learn to bait a hook." Gerbault was too hungry to spend his so, but eventually he managed to harpoon one unfortunate and after that others, so his hunger was cared for by the sea.

On the fourth of August the heavens themselves came to the aid of the *Firecrest's* water supply. In a roar of thunder and the almost continuous flame of tropical lightning, the sky opened and the rain flooded the cutter. There is no describing such rain as that. It fell in sheets and Gerbault caught enough to make him easy on the score of thirst. Only the gear failed to mend itself. Instead that got steadily worse. The topping lifts had to be spliced and spliced, and then rove off anew. The mainsail threatened to part from the gaff, and thimbles were working loose and grommets giving up on all the sails. Even so, Gerbault felt less concern than he had through the first three thousand miles of his leisurely sailing. He and the cutter were at one. She could be trusted to take care of herself. So long as he could work an altitude and a time sight she would carry him to any latitude and longitude he demanded. Even at that he had need of all his confidence.

From France he had brought a wind chart. The wind chart for July promised northeast winds from the start, fair wind of moderate force, fit to carry him swiftly to the trades proper. Once bowling along with the good trade wind clouds overhead, he had but to hold south and west until close to 20° N. and then west to nearly 70° W. when New York could be reached with fair wind to help. Scarcely a promise of that chart was lived up to. Head and baffling winds were his lot for as long as three weeks at a stretch. And at the end, instead of fair wind, came a series of westerlies. A man of less philosophy than the young Frenchman

might have felt his heart broken, but Gerbault was a good one. Where the *Firecrest* was, there was his home. Food and water, these worried one sometimes. For the rest, why hurry? He carried his house and all his possessions with him.

No less a man than John B. Kelly, who sailed the *Diabliesse* across the Atlantic and back, claimed that Gerbault turned north too soon. Gerbault trusted his wind chart. He had enough practical seamanship to keep him busy sewing sails and repairing odds and ends not to worry very much about theoretical navigation. It was enough to get a half decent sight of Polaris or a glimpse of Altair for longitude. Small boat navigation had a whole list of variables, none of which appear in nautical tables. For instance, in a small boat, where is the horizon and how be sure in any except dead calm weather? Most sextants are designed to be used in both hands, but one must live, even if it is by hanging on to a reeling mast while the sun dances drunkenly in the mirror and the horizon is first a hill of green water and then an abyss of destruction. As for the nicer points of estimating the chances of fair wind or foul, with probable velocities and possible variations, that may be well enough for the chart room of a steamer with an electric fan buzzing at one's ear, or a radiator warming one's chilled shins, but there are no fancy ways for poor lone sailor men. For most of us the chart room. Sure. Why be foolish? For Gerbault, the *Firecrest*, the endless job of holding her together and the westerly gales met south of Bermuda, with fifteen hundred miles to go before New York came in sight.

It was Thomas Fleming Day, that prince of small boat men, who pointed out that the epitome of small boat navigation lay in so maneuvering that at the end of twenty-four hours the boat had the advantage of position for the next day's run. Gerbault prac-

ticed that even when the westerly came tumbling upon him. His cutter lay over until her lee rail was under. Hatches and skylights were washed badly, the decks swept clean, cooking below just out of the question. In all this unholy chaos the mind of the cutter's skipper kept its poise. If he reached the Gulf Stream south of Bermuda he would be able to use its northeasterly drift to help him. He put the *Firecrest* on a southwesterly course eating out to windward as well as he might. How he carried on, every hour expecting something to part, bringing work and distress. Of course he was not disappointed. His staysail ripped from foot to leech and he spent a night sewing it. When he put it on her in the morning it gave up again almost at once and the mainsail followed. The sea was terrifying. Gerbault broke out his sea anchor and set a storm jib to steady her infernal rolling while he got below the ruined sails. The *Firecrest* did not heed either anchor or jib; she rode willy nilly with them both at work. He could not make her carry sail so he went below, straightened everything up and after a thirty-hour vigil turned in to get a little sleep.

The wind fell off only to come again, as is the fashion of a westerly, a hurricane in force that drove the water below deck through the hatches and made the *Firecrest* flinch, but Gerbault, save for lack of sleep, ruined hands, sea-blinded eyes, and a strained muscle was enjoying the fight.

Then came the critical August 20. It was the day of the big sea. Single waves much larger than the run of storm seas have been met by both big and little ships. When a steamer meets them the result is bashed lifeboats, twisted iron work, broken hatches. When Nutting's *Typhoon* met one she rolled entirely over. Slocum and Voss outlived such things. Gerbault



met a great brute, unbelievably high, the giant of the storm. He saw it coming in time, leaped into the rigging and watched his boat disappear below him. Slowly she cleared herself of the broken water and came up well-nigh a wreck. Her bowsprit was broken. The seizing of her port shrouds, where they went over the masthead, had parted and the mast whipped fiercely on its step, threatening to tear the deck open or go over the side. The Frenchman was quick. The bowsprit he got aboard by superhuman strength before it knocked a hole in the cutter's side. Fearful he might lose his mast, he tried to stop the shrouds and set taut, but he had not the strength for that, so he got the try-sail on her and putting her on a starboard tack brought a strain on his mast that kept it from taking charge. He was cold and wet and weak. He hove to as best he could and went below to get hot food, only to have his stoves fail him. He was low then on a half-wrecked boat. While the seas crashed upon the deck within a few inches of his head, he thought it all out. It was a thousand miles to New York. He had to think clearly. The gale had passed the fullness of its power. He turned in to shut out the chaos of the storm. It was easier to be rational below than upon the wind-torn deck. He mapped his campaign like a general. First he got his stoves working. At dawn he rigged a jury bowsprit. Then he climbed the mast and hanging head downward, his legs twined about the crosstrees, seized the port shrouds and set them taut again. A difficult job but it was coolly and expertly managed.

It was then he really loved the *Firecrest*. She was crippled under the short bowsprit but she was still tight. She was a wonder to take a three weeks' beating as she had. He would stick it out, true to her as she to him. The sails were almost in rags.

Light canvas had long since gone. Some of her standing rigging was badly chafed. He worked all day and won.

Food was running low. He lost his harpoon trying to spear a bonita. The gales held on until August 25. His position then showed he had made several hundred miles northing, but still little westing. He commenced to look for steamers knowing he was near the track in the latitude of Nantucket.

Slowly, carefully he ran down his westing. It was no time for daring. Yet he was reduced to bacon, cereal, rice and the last of his potatoes. His patent log was salted down and refused to work. On August 28 he sighted his first steamer in a long time. The next day a steamer drew alongside. When he semaphored to them asking to be reported they thought he was in trouble and came down to him endangering his crippled boat. She cut off the *Firecrest's* wind and the cutter tumbled against her iron sides, but at last Gerbault got clear and was glad to be rid of her.

He was in waters then where there is fog fifty per cent of the time. Its blindness shut him in and the wind fell so light that under the shortened rig, he had to carry out of prudence, he had scarcely steerage way. Life was a nightmare with steamer sirens hooting all about and nothing to do but keep the fog horn going. Day and night were one, for it would have been folly to sleep. Drifting slowly to the westward, caught in a world of grey light, the *Firecrest* took little care those days. Behind, somewhere, lay the turgid blue of off-shore depths. The gulf weed had given place to grass and dead insects. The fog had great holes in it, a fashion all its own east of Nantucket. Sometimes the sun came through and the horizon opened back, but in a half hour it had its way again and the sad slapping of the sea alongside and the



PHOTO BY UNDERWOOD & UNDERWOOD

His smile was happy, but the light of roving was in his eyes and would not die. He was willing to sacrifice many of the amenities, the graces, for his freedom



The *Islander* takes form



Captain Pidgeon launching the *Islander*

patter of the drip from the drenched rigging was as dismal as ever.

At last Captain Albert Hines, out of Boston, chanced upon the *Firecrest*. He invited Gerbault aboard for dinner and the voyager smiled in a way to do the heart good and leaving his cutter to hold her course went over to the *Henriette*, a fishing smack, rigged bald headed like all the fleet, and running under her engines. Life on a smack may be hard, the better the luck the harder the work, but the food is very substantial. Gerbault understood these Bankers. Fisher folk are much alike the world over. Three men, joking over their meal after a day in the dories, interested him with their quaint English. They belonged to the same age-old clan as the men of Dinard he had left so long before. Sitting in that forecabin, backed by the good warmth of the galley stove, which drove the damp of the fog out of him, he found rare good fellowship. It was no dainty boulevard meal, but Gerbault was not a man of the boulevards. He had won his way into the great brotherhood of the sea, and these men on Georges Bank gave him a welcome that he could treasure. There might be other greetings later on, crowds and noise and all, but there would be no better tasting pie and white bread in all New York, bread with butter and meat, fresh from the land invisible ahead. He ate well but quickly, for the *Firecrest* was sailing alone and now and then wisps of fog shadowed her, until she was only a blur in the greyness. He felt better when he was back on board.

Had he known a little more of Georges Bank he might not have taken the several days more that he had to loiter there so calmly. The wind would spring up only to die out. Meanwhile the infamous tide of Georges carried the *Firecrest* about at its



will. Fog and calm could not last forever and at last Gerbault saw the lift of Nantucket. Having come so far to the northward, he worked toward the mainland intent upon going down the Sound to New York.

From loneliness he passed to the companionship of boats by the hundred. The destroyers out of New London had a look at him. The many sword fishermen, who almost live between Nantucket lightship and Montauk Point, gaped at him. He was into the Sound traffic then; the flashing brilliance of steamers hustling down to Fall River, to Stonington, to Providence, or bound direct to Boston. All the coasting freighters bound down east grew familiar upon no acquaintance at all. To the very end Gerbault was to meet dangers. He wanted to get to New York, so he stayed at the tiller day and night and all the next day, pushing on to the end of his track. For his goal, then, was but a matter of hours.

The *Firecrest* was a sea-wracked thing by then. Her teak rail was grey and her white paint scarred and brown. Shell fish had fastened to her bottom together with a beard of weed. Her sails were weathered and worn gossamer thin. Her stubby bowsprit was crude to look at but had served faithfully. Like some old veteran long overdue, she came in from the great waters and slid down Long Island Sound, a wraith of her own fleet self as she had left Gibraltar, but she had made it. She had threshed out a path from the east and kept her faith with her master. No wonder Gerbault looked upon her lovingly as he stood a seventy-two-hour watch to guide her safely where she could no longer be expected to guide herself. At two o'clock in the morning of September 15, when the Sound had narrowed to East River, the *Firecrest's* anchor went down off Fort Totten. Gerbault had made

the westward passage without a port of call and had done it in one hundred one days.

That very morning he found he had become famous. Reporters came upon him in a flood and lingered longer than press men usually do. There was a charm about the battered sea-goer, about the wanderer who was so sleepy he could scarcely stand. The camera men swarmed on board calling for posed pictures. In spite of fatigue Gerbault granted every request. He had done the thing. Little as he felt like it he would carry his success off with a high hand. A stranger in a new world, he made friends on every side. The following morning he read the papers and wondered how they did it. He could not recognize himself in the articles, but the tone of every account was friendly. William W. Nutting dropped down to see him. Nutting was glad to find him a cultured man, sensitive, a sportsman of the first water, who felt that the game for itself was the thing. Other yachtsmen came, as well as men of the big ships. New York had found an interest for the moment. Gerbault and the *Firecrest* were the right sort. They should have a hand. Greatness was theirs.

Alain Gerbault was no landsman by then. He wanted to continue his journey. Ultimately he went round the world, but then he was not so definite in purpose. He wanted to wander, that was enough. Much had to be overcome, but with kindness, good luck, and that same determination that let him make the first lap of his journey in his own style, he one day passed the great bronze lady, on her island in the harbor, headed out for the fairy islands of the south. He was on his way home by following the sun, toward the other Goddess of Liberty that Bartholdi left overlooking a reach of the placid Seine.



 ONLY THE VOYAGER PER-  
CEIVES THE POIGNANT BEAUTY OF LIFE

—*Rockwell Kent*





---

## XI: THE TREASURE OF A SMILE: *Captain Harry Pidgeon*

☆☆☆ IT IS A STRANGE TRAIL THAT LEADS FROM THE COTTON-woods and the acres of corn-sown Iowa prairie to salt water. From the first, there is a dipping and rising among the homesteads that stretch the miles before the eyes with the fine calmness of rolling land. When Harry Pidgeon looked afar off to blue ranges, wonder shook him. Men work slowly toward the things of their hearts. Pidgeon moved westward like the sun, like the pioneer, like the Indian, but most of all like himself. When he was eighteen he found the west coast fell into the sea. With his mind on the wave upon wave of his own land, he looked down upon the weed-clad beach, and the surf, and then followed the restless sea to the horizon. He must have belonged to the Pacific from that moment, for a candid light of faith came to his eyes and he smiled that Pidgeon smile, which he carried so bravely around the world.

Restlessness set his heels afire, so not a great while after he went out to Alaska. There were no expeditions flying over the top of the world in those days, so he journeyed up silent rivers and built and sailed small boats. The lakes and streams of the great territory were not salt water and so he went back to the coast and served an apprenticeship in northern seas as master

of his own small vessel. His smile was happy, but the light of roving was in his eyes and would not die. The same urge that drives a deep sea sailor to scoff at men who stay moping in one ship, voyage after voyage, drove him to move on. Men who care for sophistication satisfy this madness by changing their activities; building a good automobile is followed by writing on art, or morals; the zest of invention brought to success is followed by dabbling in painting or politics. For Pidgeon it was more violent. He was willing to sacrifice many of the amenities, the graces, for his freedom. He wanted the poignancy; to see everything, to feel with everything, to be himself and yet to be free from the nonsense of living only in order to earn that living on a ridiculously unnecessary scale. He was not willing to waste his life in the treadmill of accumulation, hoping to live later. Had he been rich he might have chosen differently, but since he had to live without the blessing of wealth he would still live completely at any price.

It was then he fell upon the design of a boat. Every man who has the salt touch has somewhere in his life a boat. There is nothing queer about that. He may take half a busy day to tell about the loss of it, or close his office a half hour early to go over the drawings and half models of some dreamed of beauty, with a friend who brings with him to the festival the touch of the sea. His present craft may possess unheard-of virtues, but there is always another in his head. It is a phase of man's worship of perfection. The design Pidgeon came upon was a V-bottomed yawl. He had heard of the open sea work of Thomas Fleming Day. Knowing Day to be as much an enemy of exaggeration and falsehood as he was himself, he began to examine as his pet design a larger *Sea Bird*, the yawl that had crossed the Atlantic

in 1911. Finally, taking Day at his word, Pidgeon marshalled his resources and moved down on the beach outside Los Angeles. First he set up his camp and then he began work, alone, on a thirty-four footer, his boat. He had then nothing of her but her name. When she was launched she would be named *Islander*.

He had played at building smaller craft in his Alaskan days, boats for lake and river, but this was a sea-goer, this new one. The timbers were brutes to get out of raw material. The weakest point in V-bottom construction is where the side and bottom frames meet. Pidgeon used steel plates, through-bolted at this turn of the bilge. Planking her was tough work. Captain Slocum, faced by this same problem in replanking the *Spray*, used bolts at the butts and at the critical frames. Pidgeon spiked his planks in the usual fashion, but it was heart-breaking work. He filled out the keel until she would draw five feet when afloat, despite the more common use of the centerboard with similar hull designs. The heel of his rudder was cut away more than was standard practice, but otherwise he followed his plans pretty faithfully. She was to be a yawl, an honest rig with a generous mainsail but a quite sufficient jib and mizzen. Patiently working alone, he got the masts stepped and stayed, the running rigging rove off, and the boat painted ready to take the water. To be safe he had built her some little distance from the beach. Before he could launch he had to take to pick and shovel and cut a path for his primitive ways to be set in. The launching was no matter of shipyard despatch. Beneath the towering hull a small figure worked hurriedly with a hand spike, prying the yawl toward the water inches at a time, anxious to get her all the way in before a rising tide would take charge and perhaps hurt her by washing her from the crude cradle. At last, she was launched and Harry

Pidgeon stood grinning at her in good form. She was his to the last nail and she should go roving. He had given a year and a half of his life for his independence.

The *Islander* was a stranger. She had to be learned and loved. Before she was really free of the land her master had to become friendly with her virtues and patient with her foibles. There are things some boats won't do, and there are others to be had for coaxing with a fair manner, and perhaps the leaven of an understanding smile come forth out of humility and cunning. Pidgeon had been so busy as a shipwright that he had had no time to give to navigation, so between short sails he tackled that stumbling block to seamen and mastered it well enough to feel his wings. He was free of the beach now, free to sail all oceans. With that streak of modest whimsy that came so often into his adventures, he selected Hawaii as the goal of his trial trip. He went out single-handed and long before he got there he was blessing the mind that created the *Islander* for him to build, and was convinced he had guessed aright: this roving life suited him. He had foregone shore comforts. The malice of the sea made his yawl shiver to her honest keel at times, but even through the hard passage back to California, when he had head winds most of the way and carried a passenger for company, he felt his confidence grow. For him this lone life afloat was right. He came back a man of the big winds.

It was natural he should think of the South Seas next. He secured charts and sailing directions for places with romance upon their names, parts of Samoa, Tahiti, Nuku Hiva, Efate and Atchin. He began to look at the *Islander* from the standpoint of what she could carry and he realized she could hold enough for him to live upon at sea for a year. Once headed out, in his mind, it was

not long before he was in fact. He put aboard one hundred gallons of water—he had already learned the knack of living on two quarts a day, which is very close to the English Board of Trade minimum. His foods were a frank confession of his having turned his back on shore life. He carried canned fish, milk, tomatoes, fruit. These were held in reserve for emergencies and to lighten the staleness of diet later on. Staples from brown rice and bacon to whole wheat and corn, were carried in abundance. Captain Pidgeon intended to bake his own bread rather than rely upon the unalterable ship's biscuit. Not only was he willing to play doctor on board but he cut himself off from the luxury of flour, carrying a hand-mill in which to grind the grain as he needed it. Stocking flour in the damp of a small boat on a long voyage is a problem, and Pidgeon solved the difficulty in his own inimitable way. An honest wood-burning cook stove went into the galley. A compass, sextant and a taffrail log comprised the navigational equipment. Pidgeon cleared for ports south and west. When he reached Tahiti he went on to Samoa, and when he had seen Samoa the New Hebrides called and so at last he made Port Moresby in New Guinea, where he decided he might as well go on around the world. Between the heat of the Red Sea, ending in the expanse of Suez, and the roughness of the Cape he chose Good Hope. So by the longest way from Los Angeles he entered the Atlantic. The press trailed him, agog with wonder.

Cape Agulhas dropped behind and the mouth of False Bay yawned with the Cape of Good Hope upon the port shore of it, but Pidgeon passed on and into the shelter of the land. The lee of Table Mountain brought calm. The surf lines of creamy foam, spume tumbling upon the reefs, the lifted buttresses of the



Cape, the famous East Pier of the Table Bay Docks, to which four funneled fliers came driving down, seventeen days out of England, the old houses of Cape Town built with that honest familiarity so unmistakably Dutch, the rush and roar of a modern port: all these came to Pidgeon with a sweetness as of music. He had rounded the Cape and overhead towered the three thousand odd feet of Table Mountain, from which, and the land between, descends upon Cape Town at times the mantle of red dust which is not escaped even in bed. Land rounded on the south and east, reaching away toward the north in a long curve topped by a railroad track. Scarcely had Pidgeon made fast than he found himself with good company. He thought Cape Town the most grandly set city in the world. He was carried off to Dassen Island, a bird rookery, on an excursion and when he was at home in Table Bay he did not lack for company. With his quiet manner and ready smile he took it all philosophically. A man who lives "for to admire and for to see" acquires that. At last he had to be getting on.

On June 3 the *Islander* sailed northward. June at the Cape is midwinter, but not a worse winter than Florida usually endures. With a few lucky slants the yawl would soon be up with the tropics and with fortune, so escape the touch of frost all the way home to Los Angeles by the Panama Canal.

He ran slowly out of Table Bay with a southeast wind on his quarter. The breeze flickered and died and jumped in again. He dared not sleep, idling so close to the shore, until, after two days at sea, he thought he had dawdled clear of danger, so he turned in, tired by the tedium of his passage. He woke to a crashing shock. Galley pans were flying about, all the gear was in a maze. Through the slide he caught the ghastly white of

breaking water. On deck he found the roar of rock-spent surf upon either hand and the *Islander* nudging upon a sandy shelf between blows of the hammering breakers. He took the sails off her, despite the wind that had drawn around northwest and freshened and was responsible for putting him on the beach. The surf battered the stout hull all night, and Pidgeon hung to her for his life.

At dawn he found the tide falling and walked ashore in safety to stand shivering in his dripping clothes as the sea breeze struck him. Unshaven, dirty, with the wild fear of the night still in his eyes, he sat down to get out of the wind and when the sun came and his body felt its warmth, he watched the sea go down. To one man who had come to see the yawl roll in the surf he was very decent, joking about his shaven head which he had made ready for a long voyage. He was all courage with the *Islander* lying wrecked before his eyes. By and by a man came who promised him salvage when the weather would permit it. Then a light darted into the bluish eyes, and a beam of fun played about the voyager's face as he broke into that treasure of a smile which is his and his alone. When sunset came he was still standing by the *Islander*, hoping to get off yet. When the weather permitted she was hauled off and since she was sound, despite her rough handling, Pidgeon returned to the Cape determined to wait for the winter to be over.

On September 24 he sailed, homeward bound by the way of St. Helena. It was early spring and cool. This time he gave up the coast just as soon as possible and made for the open water. Another night there might be no miracle, for sand beaches were few and far between along that African shore. He picked up St. Helena in fine shape, thanks to its splendid lift of head land.

It has been many a day since the pomp of the British East India Company made of the island a great rendezvous for the monopoly's ships and people, using it as a southern outpost flung into the very lap of the ocean sea. It was an eighteen day run to St. Helena and eight days from there to the volcanic Ascension Island. There are few callers at the latter island and Pidgeon was treated in a frank, admiring fashion that struck him as genuine. There was, however, for him the growing lure of home. He had been gone over two years. He was something like the folk of the steamers. Eastern bound from New York, they are agog with wonder of the new life to be seen, but coming home they are drunk with impressions. The mind can digest nothing more. It's time to go home. It was somewhat Pidgeon's plight too. It was rather ordinary sailing in those seas. He sighted Fernando Noronha just before a mean experience.

He went below for the night as usual, leaving the *Islander* carrying on with her mainsail in stops. Hardly had he gotten well asleep than he was almost thrown from his bunk. The *Islander* reeled and took on a list only to come back on her feet with a jerk. Pidgeon made the deck in record time. There, high above his head, blotting out the friendly night were the flared bow plates of a steamer. He tried to cast the *Islander* clear with the tiller, but she was blanketed. A rope thumped on deck. Steam hissed. Lanterns flashed, voices bellowed impatiently. The sea hissed along the iron plates as the steamer slowly forged ahead; she was in a hurry to be off. The *Islander* was in danger. The steamer people had never doubted they were engaged in a merciful rescue, but they resented the waste of coal. They waited for Pidgeon to climb up the rope to them. At last the *Islander* sheered clear. Pidgeon, below on her deck, didn't smile any that

night. He told the steamer men shortly what he thought of them. She was a tanker, the *San Quirino*. Even as he slid away from her into the dark they were still talking about the rescue. The *Islander* had crumpled up her bowsprit and damaged her shrouds. It was a bumpy night to be batting about deep water with masts that threatened to roll out of her, but Captain Pidgeon nursed his wounded craft through. He was ten days making land. With a jury bowsprit he made Port of Spain, Trinidad, at last. A fine piratical name that, but down the main street past the bank runs that most prosaic creation, a British colonial trolley car.

Battered and lamed, the good ship *Islander* limped in. The townsmen were drawn to her. The port officials were kindly watching her work up to the docks, reefed, that she might not lose her spars. They showered upon her both honor and consideration. Pidgeon went to work to get her ready for sea again, a busy time and within ten degrees of the equator. So welcome did Pidgeon find himself and so great was the heat that he loitered until April 18.

With his experience upon the continent of Africa in mind and a desire to be very careful, seeing what damage even a blundering tanker could inflict upon him in a few minutes of careless attention, he laid a course well clear of the South American coast. He wanted to see no land in the light, uncertain winds he experienced, and he succeeded. Ten days he drifted just out of sight of what the charts call the Lesser Antilles, and then he let the *Islander* drop down as straight for Colon as he could, coming upon the canal town fairly one morning.

It was not unlike many other tropical towns. Low hills backed low houses with the prevailing red roofs. The surf swished and

broke against the black rock of the great breakwater reaching out from Toro Point, with the steel tower and octagonal lantern of its lighthouse rising at the shoreward end. Across Limon Bay waited the cocoanut palms of the sea front and the barrack-like houses of the American Christobal. Above them lifted the squared pyramid of Colon Light and round the sweep of the bay rose the same low hills, pierced, as Pidgeon knew, by the greatest canal the world has known.

He was slipping in on May 2, a slow passage, but he had crossed the length and breadth of the South Atlantic, he had picked up St. Helena, and the dew-pond crested Ascension Island, and passed the barren Fernando Noronha, finding them all in their places by his own wits. He had weathered a stranding and a collision and stood his watches, a proven navigator and a seaman. He could afford to wear his best smile for he was back in American territory. The great stone mole with its five piers reaching out like fingers into the harbor were waiting for him. Four miles beyond lay the first Gatun lock, just four miles south, the gateway to his own Pacific. The *Islander's* anchor went over. Cheerily Captain Pidgeon went ashore. He had rounded the Cape. Even in the best of sailor society he had earned the right to sit with one foot on the table. Christobal was waiting for him. He smiled as he climbed up the dock face out of his skiff, that treasure of a smile which he carried into the tropical city newly sprung from the side of Colon and built above French bones martyred for the gateway to the Pacific and the *Islander's* home port, Los Angeles.





WIDE WORLD PHOTO

Captain Franz Romer crossing the Atlantic in his rubber canoe



Paul Muller aboard the *Aga*, the staunch little sailboat which carried him across the Atlantic, only to be blown ashore and wrecked on the South Carolina coast

 ONLY A TWO INCH PLANK  
LIES BETWEEN A SAILOR AND ETERNITY: AND  
EVEN THAT PLANK MAY BE ROTTEN

—*Forecastle Saying*



---

## XII: CANOE DID YOU SAY?: *Captain Franz Romer*

☆☆☆ THE OFFICE WAS VERY QUIET. THE RATHER LUMPISH executive sat looking away into space at two photographs of aeroplanes framed and hung upon the wall facing him. Could either of them fly the Atlantic? He did not know. If they could, would it help German aviation? Was the attempt worth the money? No man could be sure. Was such a flight madness or sanity?

Captain Franz Romer faced him, waiting for the answer. He had come to the office to get money and backing. He wanted to fly the Atlantic. Hamburg to New York non-stop: there was his offer. His life was in the hazard. Planes were none too good at that time; it was 1926. The executive weighed the chances of failure. He looked anxiously at this young man sitting so calmly waiting for his answer that was a verdict as well. Here was the stuff of heroes, but Germany had had many heroes. The cemeteries were full of them. The man might be good enough or he might be crazy. It was hard to tell. Still, it was no moment for personalities. The executive could not help liking the fellow who sat so quietly waiting. It was time for thought. If Romer flew a plane to America it might be thought only a matter of luck and yet considerable money would have been spent in



the attempt. The young man might reap a bubble fame for a day, but New York was a hard city, hurtling from sensation to sensation. How many would even remember the name of the maker of the plane? Would it effect great foreign sales? He looked up quickly at Romer—now if the young man were crazy enough to attempt a round trip flight, then the return would be German. A German flight for Germans every time. Bah, it was not Romer who was crazy, it was he, the hard-headed executive who was touched. Such things were impossible. Even a single flight was impossible—no, he would say no.

“We regret——” he began, and when he had finished Captain Franz Romer uncoiled his legs slowly and took himself away, cursing the lack of enterprise of the firm, but in his heart not much blaming them.

Even his application gave him the reputation of a daring man. He had not liked being told he was crazy just because he had a splendid vision, but perhaps the Junkers were right. He made allowances for their doubts, but the risk was to have been his as well as theirs. He had the courage to put the thing through. That became noised about.

As time went on the Keppels wanted to prove their collapsible rubber boats as the most seaworthy in the world. They met the legend of the daring Romer. This time a proposition was put to him. Would he be interested in sailing and paddling a Keppel boat across the Atlantic? Romer took it carefully. He was interested. He would undertake it if he might have a hand in designing his boat. Behind this were some years of experience as a merchant seaman, and several long shore-line voyages in rowing boats. If he were to risk his neck in such a matter he wanted something to say about the boat in which he went. A trans-

Atlantic air hop—that was a matter of hours—but this was an ordeal of months. For the one—reasonable ability and luck—for the other patient cunning and the hazards of being easily lost, since the attempt would be unknown to most of the world. Keppels agreed he should have a hand in planning his boat. Perhaps they thought he was as crazy as reputed.

A rubber sailing canoe is an interesting invention. The canoe had been used before for trans-Atlantic work. Captain Voss had sailed the *Tilikum* quite around the world by a route taking him over forty thousand miles of the world's seas. The *Tilikum* was forty feet long with a beam of five feet, six inches and carried a false keel under her with five hundred weight of lead upon it. She was not built of rubber nor did she make any pretense to being collapsible. That was the last thing Captain Voss desired of her. She was an honest dugout, well braced and decked. She proved the seaworthiness of a canoe in all oceans. Mr. Henry A. Wise Wood once took his sixteen foot *Patsy Green* from New York to Prince Edward Island. He and Mrs. Wood travelled substantially on schedule, faced a gale in Nantucket Sound (there was no Cape Cod Canal in those days), escaped from a Fundy tide rip and outlived a white squall in Northumberland Strait. Their boat weighed only ninety-seven pounds and drew only eight inches of water, but it was canvas covered over strong cedar and spruce. Romer could have known nothing of that coasting trip of 1908. He did know that he could so handle any canoe that it would offer an astonishing battle to the sea.

His boat was named the *Deutscher Sport*. She was twenty-one and a half feet long, one and a half feet deep, but only thirty-six inches beam. Seated on the floor of his craft Romer could dabble his hands in the sea on either side. Rubberized fabric served her

for a skin stretched taut over the wooden frame of a sailing canoe hull. The whole could be dismantled and carried easily in a roll under a man's arm. Her mast was eight feet high and her deck at the mast step was only six inches above the water. The *Deutscher Sport* had the extreme sheer over the top side that marked her as a real canoe. The equipment designed was original in the systematic German way. Since the problem of keeping water out of a boat that sat so low was of prime concern, Romer arranged rubber sheets that fastened about the boat's gunwales and stretching over a frame that topped the cockpit were secured to his body. For night he had a combination helmet and cape. These fastened to the deck. In rough weather he had a tube to breathe through not unlike a gas mask. Since he intended to be prudent and cross by the southern route one thinks of him so accoutered sweltering through a tropic night with many misgivings. It was purchasing relative safety at a price. Life aboard her would be much like an existence passed in an Eskimo kayak; it did not suppose the possession of a pair of legs.

For navigation Romer carried a small compass, barometer, sextant and a pair of glasses. Thanks to having his canoe partly decked he was able to carry fifty-five gallons of water and five hundred pounds of tinned food. Since any accident of sorts would probably have all the effects of a catastrophe, making continuation of the voyage impossible, several rockets and Very lights were stored away. Captain Franz made no provision for cooking. At the start he would not even have room to sleep. When the boat was launched she looked nothing at all like the soaring bird he had hoped to pilot across the sea to America. She was not so big as a single wing of the *Spirit of St. Louis* for which ship was reserved the honor Romer dreamed of in 1926. He would

live in her three months at the longest—he hoped for a quicker passage.

Since the Atlantic was his field of battle he began his voyage from Lisbon on March 31, 1928. His daring was appreciated enough to make his departure worth cabling to New York. The sight of his slim craft slipping down the Tagus was more impressive than any news bulletin could be. Her sail was but a pocket handkerchief. Her eight foot mast appeared a toothpick and the hull scarcely more than a needle. Size in trans-Atlantic passages should perhaps be estimated under a tonnage rule. Shorter boats than the *Deutscher Sport* have crossed the sea, but it is doubtful if any with less free board ever set out, with her decks almost awash. It is certain no other ocean crossing was ever undertaken in a boat of thirty-six inch beam.

His first lap was a seventeen day drill down to Las Palmas in the Canary Islands. It was a bitter initiation. The first discomfort lay in his inability to move about. A canoe will not be trifled with in this particular. A sea-going canoeist may acquire a guarded technic of movement about his craft, but it always remains guarded. To be restricted for seventeen days and nights places a terrific strain upon the voyager. When the weather is bad only one position is possible and that must be held for one's life, despite tedium, no matter what protest cramped muscles offer. In these regards a canoe passage of the Atlantic sounds much like a gymnast's endurance feat, but Romer had the perils of the sea to boot.

The canoe had heavy going almost from the start. It is a windy stretch of water off the Spanish coast. The little one battled for its life from the first dip to the swell of Tagus mouth and the wind showed her no charity. Romer got into seas with

her where he did not have to struggle any longer. He could only lie and wonder when the end would come from some distraught, tumbling brute. He felt utterly ineffectual and calmly hopeless. Then at last, when the sea refused to send him to the bottom, he got way on her, but not until he had put in five days and nights without closing his eyes.

It was a nightmare of existence for an active man. Romer lost account of time, lost his reckoning. He sang and talked to himself. The shelter of his ingenious gas mask creation proved to be too good to be true. It kept off the spray, but it was too stuffy, breathing through the respirator. Southern seas were getting daily warmer. He gave up the contrivance to live in the sun and air in spite of the rain or spray. He found it was not so important to be dry as he had imagined. The world of waters he saw as a rabbit does the warren, just his own little bit and naught beyond. The canoe set so low in the water, and even standing up was so precarious an undertaking, that his sea horizon was disgustingly close. For a man who had sailed on liners, whose lofty bridges rise a sheer eighty or one hundred feet above the sea, he felt as blind as a ground mole. Yet he carried on.

He made the canoe sail herself much of the way toward the Canary Islands. The sheet was made fast to the rudder in such a way that the rudder would keep her off when the wind filled her away and would otherwise have brought her up, nose to the wind. It was a practical application of patent steering which has been universally applied to sailing model yachts. His boat so arranged, Romer's wakefulness mattered little. The boat could carry on well enough until the wind grew too heavy for her to stagger through the puffs safely. Captain Franz was the first ocean voyager to connect his sail and rudder directly. No doubt he found



it interesting to so experiment as the long miles slowly wore away.

At last he neared Las Palmas and skirted to the south island. He might have chosen Teneriffe, but the wind lay fair for the more eastward of the group. Las Palmas—the palms—substantial square houses, flat-roofed, but painted in brilliant hues. Here a dome, there a lone spire. An old city spread upon a narrow plain and broken in half by a dry river bed, bridged by a sweeping arch of stone and on the balustrade the old gods carved in marble. A city of taste, very latin, tropical, brooded over by the palms that stand silently looking on as they have for more than a thousand years. Las Palmas, with relief from the salt and the sun! Romer approached slowly, content to end the first spell at sea, and finding in the harbor of the Spanish town just such a haven as adventure should lead unto.

He gave himself contentedly to the spell of the place. It was then April 17. When he had left Lisbon he had not been sure of his success. It was all a question, but the passage to Las Palmas had been as bad as possible. Beaten by heavy winds, frightened by monstrous seas, baked by the growing sun and drenched for days together, the open sea between the Canary Islands and America could do no worse. Having lived so long, Romer was sure of success. He had not figured upon the possibilities of Las Palmas. There is a lurking fever in the Canaries. He had scarcely landed when he went down with it. The sea had been unable to dispose of Captain Franz Romer, but for some weeks it looked as if the *Deutscher Sport* had made her last gesture of defiance, for surely no one at Las Palmas was willing to take up the crossing from the point at which the captain bid fair to lay it down. Tropical summer was down in earnest before he

decided otherwise and resumed life again. He recovered slowly, but at last his legs were steady under him and he had regained much of his poise, although he found the climate enervating and deathly to a man's snap. Soon, he felt so well he wanted to get away, before he had to resume dosing himself with quinine to keep his returned health.

It was then he discovered the difficulty of being Nordic under latin authority. He applied for clearance papers. Delays began. Officers wanted to know where he was going and when he told them they shrugged and smiled. The man was fever-touched. He had best wait. To-morrow. With a waving of the hands he was put off and left politely to begin over again. His daring stunned them. When they recovered from that they did not want to part from him. He was a stout fellow. At last they had to come out flatly and refuse him clearance. They would not be to blame for helping a man to sure death. Fortunately the canoe was loaded save for additional water. Romer turned his back upon the measured words, the smile of polite refusal, the gesture that implored patience. On June 2 he waited until night-fall and going on board slipped quietly out of the harbor into the open sea. After all, he did not need clearance papers—no underwriter in the world would have taken a risk on him. If he made good he was sure the people on the other side of the Atlantic would understand. Good-bye Canaries.

It was a tough racket to work. There were days of blinding heat when the world was afire. Sun and salt ruined the captain's skin, making his hands and arms swell and stiffen until they blistered. He had no place in which to get out of it. He sat until he could not rest another second, then he heaved himself up and stood in the ticklish craft until he was forced back to the bottom

of the canoe by a quivering of muscles and a tingling of nerves that forecast exhaustion. After that came days and nights of storm. Three sharks, as ominous as ravens, flashed their shadowy lengths beneath the boat. Sometimes they scraped along the flexible bottom so that Romer felt them. It was fearsome then to have nothing but a thin fabric between one and their hunger. He grew a little light in the head from the sun and enforced inaction. He talked to the sharks, he raved at them pouring out strings of invectives under the cruel bow of the sky. The sharks seemed to understand, they vanished. Hungry as they might be, rubber and canvas that gave out funny noises was not likely matter to improve a diet. Even the fish forsook the voyager.

A month dragged away and things were much as they had been in the early days out of Las Palmas. Romer had lost his hat overboard at night in storm. That gave the sun a chance at his head, neck and back, but he was still fighting it through, driving westward under sail when he could and putting in all the hours he was able, when it failed, at the labor of paddling his heavy rig to make his two knots. There was no work to be done about the *Deutscher Sport*. She had no decks to scrub, no elaborate rigging to overhaul, no galley to clean, not even a berth to make up. Romer's whole time was given to his passage and the consideration of his chance of success, a none too cheerful or healthy mode of life. The Japanese have a proverb that it is not well to speak of fear upon the sea's breast, for the sea hath ears. The thought of fear may breed panic without the sea concerning itself. Romer had to fight that every weary sea mile of the voyage.

A month dragged toward two, and then at last, in the night, he caught lights ahead. He knew land was close. During his

passage he spoke to eight steamers, each of which, of course, wanted to rescue him as a victim of shipwreck. From these he had been able to check his position, so that he was not entirely surprised to find the lights ahead at last, but still he blinked and looked away to make sure. Yes, they were there. Lights and land. He closed in carefully, looking for a harbor. It was precarious to coast at night in strange waters. At last he opened a narrow stretch of water at the head of which gleamed the port lights of liners. He passed into the bottle-necked entrance under a steep bluff. There was no sound of surf there, instead there was the clatter of coal derricks and the white flare of flood lights turning the dock side into day. For the rest there was a bluff land of darkness reaching up into jutting peaks. Romer missed the swell. For the first time in months his body was at ease without the incessant wringing and twisting made necessary by the motion of his slim hull. A sloth crept upon him, eating into his blood, a languorous sense that the fight was over. He worked nearer, made sure he was clear of any liners that might go in or out, and let go his anchor. Oblivious of the clanking derrick, the muffled hiss of steam, the far-off voices, he snuggled down into the canoe and slept.

There had been a reason why he had not tried to land at once, a most disquieting one. He had found he could not trust his legs. By being so long cramped they had lost the power of support. To land at a strange wharf at night without help was beyond him. If he tried it, he might fall into the dock where the shadows played about the pilings. No, it would be better to wait until morning. So he slept at anchor in the harbor of Charlotte Amalia, the only city on the island of St. Thomas, a town sprawled over three mountain spurs, but coming down to the water at last, to its

landlocked harbor. Romer had made a landfall upon a far flung bit of the United States.

The islanders awoke on August 1 to find a small boat anchored in the harbor. Her low, thin mast and spider-thread shrouds made her seem all the smaller. From the bridge of a steamer lying at the wharf they could look down into her and see a man fast asleep—or worse. Word ran like fire through the town. Danish and Americans came down from their hill houses. They soon found their guest was alive, that fifty-eight days earlier he had left Las Palmas, that the long ocean passage had not been one wit worse than those seventeen days from Lisbon to Las Palmas, and that the hero could not walk for the simple reason that his legs would not hold him.

They lifted him from the well of the canoe and carried him ashore in triumph. It took him some time to get back the use of his legs. St. Thomas gave him three weeks before they called on him for any exertion. Then there was a holiday declared, August 22. The Chamber of Commerce ruled for a parade. Captain Franz Romer rode beside the President of Chamber. The canoe was mounted and wheeled into line. The procession, headed by a naval band and displaying the German and American colors, halted at the Emancipation Garden where the Colonial Council and Waldo Evans, Governor of the Virgin Islands received the hero, and he was decorated with an especially struck gold medal before the assembled populace. St. Thomas knew how to make the most of a moment of wonder. There was no mistaking their appreciation of Romer's courage.

The captain loitered in St. Thomas for six weeks. He regarded the critical part of his voyage as over. For the rest he could coast from island to island until he made Florida and so work his way



up the American coast to the Battery, New York. Two outboard motors were sent out from Germany to him at St. Thomas. He lashed a five gallon tank of gasoline on deck and mounted the motors. 'They might come in handy in case of having to run from a spell of weather, but for the rest he stood by his paddle and sail. The motors were only for an emergency. There were no more runs of twenty-seven hundred miles without a chance of sighting land.

When he left St. Thomas it was to slip out from the shadow of Blackbeard's Castle to San Juan, Porto Rico. By then the press descended upon him as an item of news. His life was made miserable by an insatiable curiosity. It became known he was twenty-nine. He had been an officer in the Hamburg-American Line. He was so sure of making his desperate passage that he had already shipped his clothes and belongings direct from Hamburg, so they might meet him when he got to New York. Yes, he was in the war. He had worked in a Zeppelin plant. He had been in the submarines. Just a little shy about that. Couldn't tell how the press might take it. Since the war his work had been in aviation. Airships were the thing, not aeroplanes. In short, he measured up to the demands of the scribblers to the best of his ability. With his canoe he had done all that Columbus had been able to accomplish with the *Nina*, *Pinta* and the *Santa Maria*, but he was anxious to push on to the mainland.

On the morning of September 12 Captain Romer sailed for Santo Domingo. The weather bureau at Porto Rico had detected a disturbance headed toward the island, but either the captain did not hear of it, or chose not to heed the warning, hoping to make land on so short a voyage before the gale might break. By night the first gust of the predicted hurricane struck San Juan,

and before the next night the island had been stripped of a fourth of its total wealth. As for the bold voyager, we may be sure his was a man's death. He was wiped out somewhere north of Porto Rico, a seaman's end in a gale of wind.



  
HARD, GLAD WEATHER

IN THE TEETH OF THE

—*Algernon Swinburne*





---

### XIII: A HARD LUCK TALE: *Paul Muller*

☆☆☆ PAUL MULLER REACHED THE AGE OF FORTY-THREE AFTER a life of adventure, pleasant and unpleasant. He had been a rolling stone perhaps, but his journeys had been confined for most part to the land. At forty-three he discovered the ocean. His interest passed all normal bounds. He would like to try life afloat. More than that he would go afloat in his own boat. He knew nothing of navigation, of seamanship. He was working in a grocery store in Berlin nearly two hundred miles from the Atlantic. It would be a little time before he could learn anything about boats and the sea, but he went to work with Teutonic thoroughness. He purchased books on how to sail a boat and he learned them by heart. He was systematic, and in view of what followed, he must have been a clever man, for few single-handers step out of a book and a grocery store and bow to the Atlantic like an old friend.

Once grounded in the rudiments of the mysteries that lay before him, Muller headed for Hamburg. There, out of his savings as a grocery man, he bought a boat. She was eighteen feet long, six feet beam, single masted with a stick fourteen feet high. She was rigged with a single leg-of-mutton sail, no jib or topsails, a rig simplicity itself. There was a cabin, small but snug, and a square well aft in which to steer.

Once in possession, Muller hesitated a little to get his boat into what his books told him was right for so daring a voyage. In mind, he was upon the salt Atlantic, but in fact he was tied up in Hamburg, learning his boat from the keel up. He named her the *Aga*, for romantic reasons, and on July 6, 1928, he cleared from Hamburg. His friends had done their best for him. They had helped fit him out with stores. They had come to see the cockle shell at her berth, but one and all had watched Muller to catch the mad glint in his eye. No sane person could want to do such a thing. Poor fellow, he was a lunatic. It was a hard-headed, hard-working Germany that was left after the pyrotechnics of 1914. Poor Muller, he must be mad. What else is it when so old a man sails in so small a boat? Oh, sad. Muller had lost his mind.

He hadn't before he sailed, but he nearly did in those first days afloat. The North Sea was in form to receive him and the Channel tides made a mock of him. The books had said nothing of sea-sickness. They had said nothing of being so tossed about that the small sail could not be kept full of wind, no matter how one obeyed the rules that were in print. There were no instructions on how to cook with the deck trying to crawl up beside one and turn in for a nap. The sea was rougher than promised, the published wisdom hopelessly inadequate, but there was nothing to do but go on. Channel squalls took him completely by surprise, but fortunately the *Aga* was so under canvassed that no carelessness could capsize her, and Muller did learn.

He learned enough to get in and out many of the French ports as he cruised south. He had a look see at Havre, and Cherbourg, Brest and Biarritz. Skirting the shore of the dreaded Biscay he worked west along the ragged coast of northern Spain. Grey rock,

clouds split by the mountain tops whirling about the sheer lifts, an upheaven land rudely sprung from the sea. Sunny Santander, steep Ortegal, old Corunna, frowning Finisterre, a brute of malevolent rock with the soul of a devil. Then the first Portuguese town, Oporto, and so to Lisbon. On the north coast he had had a bad time, sometimes tacking a whole day only to lose twenty miles by the end of it. The west coast was kinder. He was getting along better then and he slipped across the Mediterranean mouth and on down the African coast to Teneriffe in the Canary Islands. Not a bad beginning for an amateur, who was new to the sea and the ways of his packet. By going so far south on the African coast he had reached a latitude of 28 N. At Teneriffe he sought help. The *Aga* needed a navigator. Muller had no chronometer, no sextant. The sun could mean nothing to him. So far he had sailed by a rough coastal piloting and his ability to read a chart. What he needed was someone to work out a great circle course for him, tell him to what extent his course should be changed every six hundred miles. His errors might average up and his landfall on the other side be somewhere near where he aimed. This seemed practical but was really impossible. Since the *Aga* needed wind more than she did a navigator, she had to go where it was. Muller was advised to leave Teneriffe on a south-west course until he reached a latitude of 20 N. Then he could turn due west. The doldrums and the Sargasso Sea would lay way to the north. The wind should be fair. This route would be lonely. Near Africa a few lines plying to the Cape might by accident have a steamer pass close, and the same might happen when once in to the West Indies, but there was no established steamer track paralleling the course of the *Aga*. Possessed of this advice, Muller went to work to provision his eighteen footer.

Thirty-five gallons of water were put on board and food for only ten weeks. Muller was an optimist or else frugal in habits, for there was not much margin allowed by such shortage of supplies. On the other hand, he had been living on board for months and had had ample opportunity to learn his needs. He had left Hamburg July 6 and this stop in Teneriffe did not end until February 14. All the interval had been spent with the *Aga*. He should have learned his needs in eight months.

The people of Teneriffe were very dubious of his success. His boat was so small and so badly rigged and his inexperience patent to everyone with whom he talked. Trust an island people to appreciate the hazards of a voyage. When he sailed they cried after him, "Good-bye forever." In a short time he struck a storm that took his breath away. He got the sail off her and going below clung to his cabin carlines, waiting for the end, but he had a long watch, for the *Aga* carried him through nobly. She was a trim little packet though without beauty. It was blind sailing for him when at last he got under way. He had to trust to his previously plotted compass course, hoping he had not been carried so far out that it would prove ineffectual.

Eight weeks he managed to battle along. Then his supplies ran low. In the heat of the tropical seas he cut his food as scant as he dared. He moved as little as possible, trying thus to keep down his hunger and husband his strength. He got his consumption to two biscuits a day and washed them down with a quart of water. The heat made it all a nightmare, but the sea held smooth with encouraging winds. It was indeed a lonely track he sailed, with never a sail or steamer smoke to hearten him. He was hard-headed through it all.

He made his landfall at Fortune Island to the east of Cuba.

His course had carried him three degrees north of what he had hoped for. That was not so bad for an amateur boatman who had learned his seafaring from a book. The wind had been from all points of the compass, mostly from the east to be sure, but with enough variation to make his track a drunken, staggering progress. Luck was with him. At Fortune Island he was received as a man dropped from the clouds, a wonder of the time. This was repeated at Gitara, Cuba, and at Havana. At the capital he refreshed himself and, with the boat newly stocked, crossed to the Florida coast and began his piloting again. A storm tossed him high and dry at New Smyrna, Florida, but he patched his battered hull and pushed off. He was aware, by practical knowledge, of the danger of a lee shore, so when he sailed again he went well to sea and felt safe when he found himself in the Gulf Stream.

Then followed the dénouement. The *Aga* had struggled well. She was probably sea weary. She was headed toward the dread Hatteras. The region is not healthy. A few times a season a big one will come tearing up the coast on its eastward recoil but the damage is usually slight, for storm warnings precede it so far that vessels have a good chance to escape. Along the coast of South Carolina, out of nothing at all, will spring a storm of hurricane force, lasting but a short time, yet in the few hours of its life driving everything under sail before it. The *Aga* was overcome by one of these "local disturbances" as the weather bureau sometimes calls these vagaries. The southeast wind took charge of her, brushing the amateur aside and mocking at his efforts. Before he could attempt to fight, the boat was smothered by a brute of a wind-sea, driven helter skelter by the gale. It was a time of terror, for Muller was completely overcome by the strength of the attack. He had never thought of anything like it. For him there



was nothing but resignation, the chance of surrender was denied. The *Aga* drove toward shore, entered the savage surf, lived somehow through the heaped outer giants and though broken and bashed washed out high and dry upon the Carolina shore.

What followed seemed like a piece of ritual. The *Aga* was done. The hull was crushed beyond repair. The gallant seagoer was but a twisted hulk. Muller looked about him, amazed to be alive, wondering where he was and what new adventure waited. He heard only the scream of the sea wind and felt the beach beneath his feet tremble to the pounding. It was dusk. He was on a sand spit barely above the thrust of the hissing white water, an island. When he saw his plight he knew that he would be leaving, for just inland was a higher island, and the thing Muller wanted was a roof and food. Before he left he set the *Aga* afire. She would go the way a good seafarer should if she must die ashore. It was a hard fire to start, but oil helped and once the flames licked up across her decks she became a beacon telling of his plight.

In the gloom of the lowered night the yellow tongues were welcome. Muller buried what things he had been able to rescue in a sand bank, all but his tin box of papers. He waited patiently for rescue. The *Aga* burned smokily, but no one came. Across what seemed a narrow slough of water loomed a high island. Taking his tin box the castaway waded to it. Once away from the glow of the fire his eyes cleared. The *Aga* had come ashore near the mouth of an inlet. Far up the channel he caught the shadowed shoulder of a house set in scrub brush. He set off, swimming this time, his precious box held above water.

His fire had been seen. Fritz Strobel was scouting to catch any bootlegger who might have been forced on the beach. It would

be easy to capture any who came out of the sea after that storm. Strobel patrolled Kaiwah Island in a rowboat when he saw the fire. Was it a lure to take him from some point where rum was coming ashore? He rowed slowly toward the island and came upon Muller swimming in the dark. He pulled him into the boat, believing he had a desperate runner who was working some dodge of his own. Before, he had been suspicious of the fire. Now he imagined this castaway had strayed into his path to keep him from the fire. So he pulled down to the embers of the *Aga* and forced Muller to spend the night with him there.

He listened to the lone hand's story and believed none of it, although the charred ribs of the *Aga* lay before him. A boat had come in from somewhere, and when the runners found they were stranded they had scattered and Muller happened to be caught. Strobel's logic was sound, because he thought in the terms of the usual, but when he said he would hold Muller till daylight anyhow and Muller asked why, Strobel said simply:

"Violating the eighteenth amendment."

"Vas ist das?" asked Muller.

He had never heard of prohibition.

In the morning a passing boat took them to Charleston. The old city took to this venturer bravely. He was made an official guest at a hotel. The Chamber of Commerce launched a drive to get him a new boat, and with typical progressive zeal they had the *Aga II* launched at the opening of the new Cooper River bridge and presented it to Captain Paul Muller with genial southern grace and the compliment of fine words.

About then it was discovered that romance had lain behind the intention of Muller. His voyage, he was sure, would bring him fame, but most of all money to buy a home on a farm, and marry

Agatha Garvinski. No sooner did the good people of Charleston find out this than Agatha was brought from her position in Berlin to Charleston. Mayor Thomas P. Stone gave the bride away at their public wedding on August 29.

Muller had left Hamburg to sail to New York and there was nothing now to prevent him. He was married and the *Aga II* was afloat. She looked a great deal more like an ocean goer than the earlier *Aga*. Her name was lettered on her side with the addition of *Charleston, U. S. A.* She had the same single cat rig, but the sail had a gaff and boom. For the rest, she had a cabin forward under a rounded deck and a square steering well aft. The sail was lighter than the canvas of most single-handers, but she promised to be an able boat in everything else. The first *Aga* had a square stern but the second was a double ender.

Muller put out from Charleston on September third. Mayor Stone gave him a letter of good will for Mayor Walker. Agatha Muller was left behind. Paul realized that while he expected to have no trouble on this last leg of his journey, he had best sail it as he had the rest—alone. He had had really famous luck in crossing the ocean. Perhaps it would hang with him this last bit.

Cape Hatteras was too much for him. Almost before he had a chance to learn his boat a storm caught her. She was dismayed and then fortunately cast away on Hatteras sands. Muller might have had the luck to lose that mast where he could have drifted a week caught upon the wreck and unable to navigate. Had he been in the Gulf Stream he might have drifted until some day the little boat turned up in the far northern seas with only his body on board to tell the pitiful tale of the derelict. Yes, Muller luck held to the end, the captious luck of the land-lubber. Behold, when he was washed out of the moil, who would be waiting to

help him but the coastguards. He was wrecked properly that time, left only half clothed upon a barren outer beach. The *Aga II* did not live to let him sail up to the Battery in style. Instead, he got what clothes he could from the coastguards who were decent enough to send him on to Norfolk. Once there, he called upon his store of experience and beat his way to New York over the railroad, risking both dismemberment by the slip of a foot and the bullets of careless yard detectives. Muller was ashore again and his luck was still with him.







 BIBLIOGRAPHY



---

## BIBLIOGRAPHY



- AMUNDSEN, ROALD, *The Northwest Passage, Being the Record of a Voyage of Exploration of the Ship Gjoa 1903-1907.* NEW YORK, 1908
- ANDREWS, THE BROTHERS, *A Daring Voyage Across the Atlantic Ocean by Two Americans.* NEW YORK
- BARROW, SIR JOHN, *Mutiny of the Bounty.* LONDON, 1914
- BENNETT, ARNOLD, *From the Log of the Velsa.* NEW YORK, 1914
- BLUNDEN, EDMUND, *The Bonadventure.* NEW YORK, 1923
- CLEVELAND, RICHARD J., *A Narrative of Voyages and Commercial Enterprises.* 2 vols. CAMBRIDGE, 1842
- COLLINS, DALE, *Sea Tracks of the Speejacks Around the World.* NEW YORK, 1923
- COOKE, F. B., *Single Handed Cruising.* LONDON, 1919
- CRAPO, CAPTAIN THOMAS, *Strange But True, Life and Adventures of Captain Thomas Crapo and Wife.* NEW BEDFORD, 1893
- DANA, RICHARD H., JR., *Two Years Before the Mast.* PHILADELPHIA, 1911
- DAY, THOMAS FLEMING, *Across the Atlantic in the Sea Bird.* June to November 1926 Fore and Aft.
- DELANO, CAPTAIN AMASA, *Narrative of Voyages and Travels.* BOSTON, 1817
- DOUBLEDAY, RUSSEL, *A Year in a Yawl.* NEW YORK, 1923
- FARMER, H. F., *Log of a Shellback.* NEW YORK
- FENGER, F. A., *Cruise of the Diabliesse.* NEW YORK, 1927
- GERBAULT, ALAIN, *The Fight of the Firecrest.* NEW YORK, 1926
- HILDEBRAND, ARTHUR STURGIS, *Blue Water.* NEW YORK, 1923
- KENT, ROCKWELL, *Voyager's Log.* CENTURY MAGAZINE, NEW YORK, JULY TO OCTOBER, 1923
- KNIGHT, E. F., *The Cruise of the Alerte.* NEW YORK, 1903
- KNIGHT, E. F., *The Cruise of the Falcon.* NEW YORK, 1904
- KNIGHT, E. F., *The Falcon on the Baltic.* NEW YORK, 1905

- LONDON, CHARMIAN K., *Log of the Snark*. NEW YORK, 1915
- LONDON, JACK, *The Cruise of the Dazzler*. NEW YORK, 1902
- LONDON, JACK, *The Cruise of the Snark*. NEW YORK, 1911
- LOOMIS, ALFRED E., *Cruise of the Hippocampus*. NEW YORK, 1922
- LUBBOCK, BASIL, *Round the Horn Before the Mast*. NEW YORK, 1902
- MACMECHAN, ARCHIBALD, *Sagas of the Sea*. LONDON, 1923
- McMULLEN, R. T., *An Experimental Cruise, Single Handed in the Procyon, Seven Ton Lugger*. LONDON, 1880
- MANSFIELD, ROBERT BLACHFORD, *Log of the Water Lily during Three Cruises*. LONDON, 1873
- MAXWELL, DONALD, *The Log of the Griffin*. LONDON, 1905
- NORDENSKOLD, A. E., *Voyage of the Vega Round Asia and Europe*. LONDON, 1886
- NUTTING, WILLIAM WASHBURN, *The Track of the Typhoon*. NEW YORK, 1922
- PAINE, RALPH D., *Lost Ships and Lonely Seas*. NEW YORK, 1921
- PEARS, CHARLES, *From the Thames to the Seine*. PHILADELPHIA, 1910
- RANSOME, ARTHUR, *Racundra's First Cruise*. NEW YORK, 1923
- REISENBERG, FELIX, *Under Sail*. NEW YORK, 1924
- RUNCIMAN, SIR WALTER, *Before the Mast and After*. LONDON, 1924
- SLOCUM, CAPTAIN JOSHUA, *Around the World in the Sloop Spray*. NEW YORK, 1903
- STOCK, RALPH, *The Cruise of the Dream Ship*. NEW YORK, 1921
- VOGEL, K., *Aloha Around the World*. NEW YORK, 1922
- VOSS, CAPTAIN J. C., *The Venturesome Voyages of Captain Voss*. BOSTON, 1926
- WALDO, FULLERTON L., *The Saga of a Supercargo*. PHILADELPHIA, 1926
- WARD, ARTEMAS, *Columbus Outdone! Captain Andrews' Cruise in the Sapolio*. NEW YORK, 1893
- WELLS, F. DEWITT, *The Last Cruise of the Shanghai*. NEW YORK, 1927
- WHIDDEN, CAPTAIN JOHN D., *Old Sailing Ship Days*. BOSTON, 1908
- WILLOUGHBY, HUGH L., *Across the Everglades*. PHILADELPHIA, 1898





